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A BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY  
OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BROOM

STARVEACRE

WOLFANG

FRUIT OF EARTH

THE HUMAN CIRCUS

THE HERETIC

SILAS BRAUNTON

THE WINDLESTRAW

THE SINFUL SAINTS

*Translations : with*

S. F. MILLS WHITHAM

MEMOIRS OF THE BASTILLE

THE WILES OF WOMEN

THE SHOJI







LOUIS XVI  
By Duplessis (Versailles)

A  
BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY  
OF THE  
FRENCH REVOLUTION

By  
J. MILLS WHITHAM



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“ I consider civil liberty, in a genuine, unadulterated sense, as the greatest of terrestrial blessings. I am convinced that the whole human race is entitled to it, and that it can be wrested from no part of them without the blackest and most aggravated guilt. The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.”

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

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## FOREWORD

THE literature on the French Revolution has its own progressive laws. The early writers based their conclusions on memoirs, letters, pamphlets, newspapers, hearsay and much prejudice social and political; their successors extracted solid and durable matter from official sources, the papers of the Paris Commune and so on, fashioning the way for authorities like Sorel, Aulard, and for living writers. Though many ideas expressed before or at the time of the Revolution have perished in what Acton called the melting-pot of History, that era of destruction and construction extends to this day, and principles stern and unyielding yet engage and sometimes exasperate politicians, economists, idealists and realists; in fact most of the modern problems with their difficulties and perils are discoverable or foreshadowed in the French Revolution, though History never repeats itself exactly. Meanwhile it is to be remembered, as a great historian declared, that the Revolution will never be intelligibly known to us until we find its conformity to the common law, and recognise that it is not singular and exceptional. Thus we need not be dazzled by grandeur, like the radiant Michelet, nor blinded by fatalistic woe, like the sombre Taine; nor is it essential to plead or to make apologies, while awaiting the far-distant advent of the ideal writer who will state facts, uninfluenced by legends and passion.

The following studies are impressions, psychological enquiries, the main purpose being to discover how this and that outstanding figure in the years that remoulded France and Europe fulfilled his destiny and helped to



## FOREWORD

determine his own fate; how he dealt with life and faced death, wandering in the labyrinth ordained for him, baffled and plagued at a time when men found themselves plucked bare of conventional rags and decency trimmings and had to fend as they could, urged to acts of the greatest heroism, often reduced to a tragic despair, occasionally driven to a bestial fury. This book would be sterile and obscure without an historical background; and so there are interpolated short chapters other than biographical, and each study has its central historical incident, a predominant fact in the narrative of the man being shown as a predominant fact in the narrative of the Revolution. The history of the world, we are told, is but the biography of great men; and the men of this book fancied they were leading their fellows, and, in a measure, this was the truth; but they were also led. Consequently much of the ordered story is repeated briefly here, illustrating the double reaction of men on the Revolution and the Revolution on men.

Among the crowds in tumult who pass over the revolutionary stage there are several notable groups with their unnumbered disciples and direct opponents: Mirabeau surrounded by such men as La Fayette, Barnave, Sieyès, and the political idealists and schemers of the National Assembly; Vergniaud, Condorcet, Brissot, Roland, Danton, at the time of the Gironde, men of ideas, economists, egoists and others; Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon, members of the great Committees, men of the Terror, doomed to extinction after at once rousing France to incomparable daring, and amputating her with their surgery; Barras, Tallien, Fouché, and their fellows who preceded a noxious oligarchy and so unwittingly blazed a path for the Cæsarean dictator, the Emperor. The Revolution sways and turns around these groups, a convulsion between its own past and future; and three men overshadow the rest: Mirabeau, Danton, Bonaparte. It would

## FOREWORD

seem as if Nature, Fate, Necessity, God, or whatsoever name we give to the primordial and unknowable Impulse at work, attempting to bring order out of chaos, made three distinct and potent experiments in search of its conquering Man of Destiny. Mirabeau, Danton and Bonaparte had kinship inasmuch as they were realists.

The form chosen in presenting the men, and the Revolution, imposes slight oscillations in the progress of the narrative; yet chronology is observed, these to and fro movements being no more than so many eddies, as it were, in the revolutionary current. Camille Desmoulins, for example, is taken in relation to the Fall of the Bastille, though his death occurs years later. And so a patient and accommodating reader may be able, it is hoped, to gain a lucid notion of the Revolution from its ascribed beginnings to a nominal end.

My obligations in the matter of reading are too numerous to name here, but a selected Bibliography is appended for the use of those who would study the subject more narrowly; and it shall serve as the measure in part of my debt to writers now quiet, and others yet alive and therefore restless. In addition, I must thank the editor of *The Times Literary Supplement* for permission to take material from my articles printed in that journal, and my publisher for permission to make use of an introduction to the *Memoirs of the Bastille*. There is a Chronological Table at the end of the book for readers who otherwise might lose sense of Time in the profusion and entangled spread of incidents and crises.

J. M. W.



# A Biographical History of the French Revolution

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTION

MODERN history is named as a subject to which neither beginning nor end can be properly assigned, and that supposition might be applied to the history of the French Revolution, accounting for the diversity and confusion as to what were its actual beginnings. It would be not impossible to take the fable of Eden, the serpent and the fall of man as a start. Michelet wrote a history of France in many volumes, straining to establish the origins of his Revolution; others look to the invasion of the Gauls, the age of Louis XI, the Reformation. Certainly the eagerness to attain freedom of conscience and religious liberty led to the cry for political freedom; and the advance of the world to self-government, it is written, would have been arrested but for the strength given by the religious motive in the seventeenth century, the claim of every man to be unhindered by man in duty to his idea of God being the secret essence of the Rights of Man and the indestructible soul of Revolution. Hence the remark that he who would treat politics and morality apart will never understand anything about either.

Louis XIV, following the sagacious and tolerant policy of statesmen like Henry IV in dealing with the

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feuds, the blow and thrust of Catholics and Protestants at the commencement of his reign, unhappily changed his tactics at home and abroad when he had established his invincible despotism, believing he represented in himself the triumph of the Crown over the State, the State over the Church. The State, he was the State! He felt omnipotent after his successful wars of aggression and annexation, not yet having to brave the final coalition of powers against him; and he began his new policy, extending claims, forcing them by the sword. About this time he lost his Queen, and married the most constant and resolute of his former mistresses, Madame de Maintenon; who, in her pious disgust with Jansenists and Protestants, directly or otherwise influenced him, alluring him down the perilous slope of autocracy. He revoked the Edict of Nantes and so deprived French Protestants of their religious freedom, driving many thousands to a forced conversion, to exile or death, confiscating their substance in the process. Within a little time there were smouldering hatreds and seeds of revolution in France; and Europe, alarmed at the danger of this absolute and irrepressible monarch, who saw his own nation only in himself and meant to control Europe, prepared for the Grand Alliance, and his eventual punishment.

Louis XIV, consolidating his early gains, molested and impoverished his subjects in the dizzy pursuit of his own glory. Before the War of Spanish Succession, when he had to face the nations leagued against him, his minister Vauban had written to him of the increasing misery of the people, declaring that they were reduced to beggary; and after that war, and at the death of the disillusioned though unrepentant King in his seventies, France, exhausted, seemed on the verge of bankruptcy, such a condition being the logical outcome of the Great Age. He filched liberty from the mass of the people, taxed them nearly to extinction to pay for his wars and Court mummeries and his glory, raided their families

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to man his armies, and bequeathed a despotism to his successor. His ministers were supple, obedient to him; nor had it been to his interest, he wrote in his *Memoirs*, to choose men of eminence for the ministry. He convinced the people that he had no intention of dividing power with anyone. He had his *Parlements* at Paris and in the provinces, so many Courts of Justice; judicial offices were purchasable, transmitted from father to son, magistrates being mostly parvenu aristocrats, *noblesse de robe*; and justice had become a possible instrument of oppression and tyranny. As late as 1786 men were condemned to be broken on the wheel. *Parlements* had rights of registration and protest, an ostensible veto on royal decrees; the King, however, enforced his proclamations by holding a *lit de justice*, overriding opposition, bringing recalcitrants to order, if he did not elect to suppress them. La Bruyère wrote that the duty of judges was to dispense justice, their profession to postpone it. In addition, by *lettres de cachet*, administrative orders under the privy seal, the King might imprison or exile anyone at will. No legal process could help the prisoner to release or to a trial; no citizen could rest assured that his liberty would not be sacrificed to royal authority or to the private grudge of citizens more influential than himself. The King established *Intendants* throughout the country to uphold his laws and his own interests, sold offices, spreading corruption in local administration, tormenting the lives as well as the consciences of his subjects. He centralised government at Versailles, insisting that his nobles should leave their estates and their duties, attend obsequiously on him and share an extravagance brilliant, and at length crazy beyond redemption; and his minister Colbert had the boldness to tell him that neither in war nor in peace did the King consult his finances or balance revenue and expenditure. Louis XIV established his imputed and eventually factitious splendour, his early genius as a monarch in

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decline; and he strengthened the foundation of the Revolution.

Louis XV, after the unclean, debased Regency, wanted to continue the tradition of the Great Age. Fénelon, perhaps the most wise and benign, assuredly the most clairvoyant, of the men about the King, had said that power was poison; that as most Kings were bad they ought not to govern, but only to execute the law; that a sound and reasonable Constitution alone could avert disaster for France, since the despotism of Louis XIV had made him odious and contemptible, provoking all the evil endured by the nation. Fénelon prophesied that absolute monarchy would breed revolution and advance its own destruction. Louis XV had neither the will nor the intelligence to give attention to the ideas of humanitarians like Fénelon, nor the ability of a Louis XIV to be consistent in his own absolutism, and he avoided the responsibilities of kingship while profiting from tyranny. He soothed himself with titled and untitled strumpets, produced his brood, repeating his "After us the deluge!" cynical, indifferent to the future of France, draining the country to pay for his lusts and follies, and later the lusts and follies of his favourites and the Court parasites, his advisers: the sickened image of a King toward his end, puddled in his wits though yet able to play despot and to load his several Bastilles. The Marquis d'Argenson wrote in his anger that at a time of peace and with all appearance of a good harvest in the country, men were eating grass; that redoubled taxes were collected ruthlessly, and ruination confronted France. The death of Louis XV afforded greater relief than that of his forerunner to the people. Old courtiers were anxious only to preserve their credit under the new reign, young ones to supplant the old. Meanwhile the deluge approached, already sounding in a persistent low diapason. The French people, credulous and simple, had suffered, not always mutely, yet tamely, submissive by

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force of venerable tradition; and now they suffered and were fast becoming painfully self-conscious, and articulate.

In the past, under a feudal system based on landed property, honest and well-meaning Barons, the ancient rivals of Kings and now sovereign in their own domains, had given safety to their dependants, protecting them against invasion, holding themselves responsible as they administered law; and they were privileged, such privilege being a just recompense for the fulfilment of their patronal and paternal duties. In the age of Louis XIV, when the dangers prevalent during feudal times had almost disappeared, the nobles and high clergy yet retained privilege, and slighted, often ignored, their new and old duties. Privilege, not founded on equity, had become a national gangrene. While the people were enduring the moral and physical torment imposed by agents of the Crown and feudal dues, the nobles who were not impoverished attended the Court, uprooted, living and thriving on supplies from folk demoralised by subjection and who had learned, here and there, to hate their lords. Serfdom yet continued; nor was it wholly extinct before the Revolution; and since the nobles and clergy, employing their advantage, were exempt from nearly all the more severe taxes, the people supported the ever augmenting financial burdens of France. Privilege had detached itself from service; the duty of safeguarding the people had become an insolent and aggressive right against the people. Masters were absent from their estates, great tracts hitherto cultivated grew rank, justice had devolved into chicanery and corruption, and the land cried for a relief withheld, impossible, nobles and clergy and the King having apparently allied themselves in a hostile conspiracy to maintain themselves in their pleasure at the expense of the commons; withal, debauchery and cheaterly riddled the Court, where the underlings robbed their overlords even as the overlords robbed their vassals.



## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

General rebellions and revolts of a whole people were never encouraged, Burke wrote; always they were provoked.

Arthur Young, travelling across certain districts a year or so before the Revolution, saw fields in devastation, homes clogged with misery; women were without shoes and stockings, ploughmen without sabots; and, he said, poverty struck at the root of the French nation. What had Kings and Ministers and States to answer in face of a people who, longing to be industrious, were forced to idleness and starvation through the claims of despotism or the ineradicable prejudice of a feudal nobility? Nothing but privilege and poverty; no gentle transitions from ease to comfort, from comfort to wealth; everywhere quick passage from beggary to profusion. Elsewhere in France peasants were more fortunate, and agricultural reforms engaged men in authority. Most of the important appointments in State and Church and the general administration were reserved for the nobles or the new rich, and monopolies extended to things trifling and ridiculous. The right of having an aviary or a dovecote depended solely on a man's position in society; a commoner must not keep a pigeon; to snare a rabbit or a hare meant death; and hunting rights strangled farmers.

Among the numerous harsh taxes paid by the people, *gabelle* or salt-tax seems to have been one of the most obnoxious. Salt cost thirteen *sous* a pound, and every commoner over seven years of age was registered as having bought seven pounds a year: thus, as Taine showed, when there were four persons in a family, each year they paid a sum equal in value to nineteen days' full labour for salt provided by government. If anyone did not buy salt, the officials had power to distrain, to charge the delinquent with the cost of such distraint. If a peasant economised on salt in order to salt a pig, the pig was confiscated and he had to pay a fine of three hundred *livres*, salt for pork being additional to

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the ordinary supply; therefore he had cheated the revenue. If anyone used sea-water, a fine of twenty to forty *livres*; if anyone grazed animals on a salty marsh, or allowed them to drink sea-water, confiscation of the animals, three hundred *livres* fine.

Louis XVI announced from the throne that he willed and meant to remove all obstacles planted by time or accident in opposition to the happiness and well-being of his loyal people; and the people were indeed loyal, trusting the new, amiable monarch, seeing him as an adversary of feudal and administrative iniquities and the protector of all good citizens; as one who, like themselves, yearned for deliverance from parasitic nobles, slothful and venal functionaries, looking to his people for help, as they to him. The more intelligent of Frenchmen were dubious, afraid of royal prerogative, and expected betterment only from a King who would govern by constitutional law and not by caprice; who would abolish privilege, tame profligate aristocrats and reorganise France. Should there be a Constitution, or must sovereign will continue? A spirit dormant for ages had risen and now spied here and there, ardent for change, energetic, easily led, perchance more easily misled. Louis called on his God to guide and protect him when he came to the throne in 1774, saying he was too young to reign. France, in truth, needed the combined genius of a Cromwell and a Richelieu to save her; and Louis' main secular interests centred in hunting and eating, in ironmongery and good-fellowship. National bankruptcy stared at him and bewildered him. He had sense enough to choose Turgot for his Controller-General: a man friendly to the Encyclopædists, pledged to reforms; an evolutionist who thought that upward growth and progress moral and intellectual were laws of human life. Turgot had profound knowledge of the political science on which economics would have its broad base later, convinced that a man's most sacred property was his labour; and he knew what he meant

by freedom, aware that as there had been a supposed Divine Right of Kings, now there were Divine Rights of Men.

He wanted a stable Constitution, with an enlightened ruler; and he sought to enlighten Louis, also to restrain him, aiming for the general rather than for the particular good. With the support of a wise and forceful King he might have cleared France of privilege, suppressed fiscal tyrannies, established something like equality among all citizens as citizens, and restored the finances; but Louis, though benevolent, was neither wise nor forceful; and his Queen, piqued at the stern virtues of Turgot, detested him, as did the Court, alarmed by his probity and reforming zeal. Queen, Court, nobles, and financiers, prevailed on Louis. Turgot and his plans were chased into exile. Voltaire said that never could he and his fellows console themselves, having seen the golden age dawn, and expire; his eyes glimpsed only death in front of him, now that Turgot had gone, the news falling like thunder on his head and heart alike; the rest of his days could never be other than undiluted bitterness. Voltaire's rhetorical grief and real dismay were shared by the best men of France. The *corvée*, unpaid obligation of peasants to leave work on demand and to assist in labour often useless and foreign to them, had been abolished by Turgot, one among many of his humane measures. His successor revived it; an act typical of the new reactionary policy. France, however, drove rapidly to financial smash, the new minister could not stem the breakneck pace, and he too had to go; likewise the more reputable Necker, a banker relying on loans, sure that a depleted treasury would recover in a fancied imminent commercial boom following the American War. Necker resigned; and appeared again on a crowded and vociferous stage later. The control of finance passed eventually to Calonne, a favourite of the Queen; and he, in effect, reported to Louis that the richest class in the land contributed least, privilege

having destroyed all equilibrium; that a kingdom so encumbered with governmental vices could not be governed. Yet Calonne, himself one of the privileged, did nothing to reduce his own extravagance, abetting the extravagance of the Court, and of courtiers inert though joyous within sight of peril. Calonne, having failed, made way for others; and for quarrels with the Assembly of Notables, with the *Parlements* and especially the *Parlement* of Paris; and for subterfuge, hatreds and hostilities, compromise, loans, panic measures; for the widespread turmoil that led finally to the summoning of the States General, an Assembly of nobles, clergy and commons, and to the Revolution.

A prolonged drought in 1788 and the storms making end to it preceded an unusually severe winter, and famine goaded peasants in their misery and hardship and inflamed the national temper. Mallet du Pan, most vigilant of politicians, said that no two schemes, ideas or proposals for safety were alike. Assemblies were being held in the provinces with or without orders, sometimes in defiance of order, and men and groups were set one against the other, the excesses and abuse of power having riven the land, unsinewed France being on the eve of civil strife when the King would be forced to oppose one half the nation to the other. Formerly that weight of tradition inducing the vexed surrender of a majority to the will and ancient prestige of a minority, led by a King and the ecclesiastical fry, had been enough to devitalise active opposition and intimidate rebels; but for upwards of a century assiduous pioneers had striven, at first covertly, undermining tradition, and men could now speak hysterically in their enmity of the day when the last King might be choked with the entrails of the last priest. A swarm of thinkers had been loosed over and in France; spiritual warriors sharing Cromwell's belief that it would be found unjust and unwise jealousy to deprive a man of his natural liberty on the supposition that he might abuse it; and

they created a new spirit in the intellectual life of France, many of the middle-class, and others in 1789, having drunk deep or furtively tasted the heady rich brewage of the philosophers.

The movement could be traced to the Renaissance, heralded by the illustrious humanists. Rabelais, Montaigne, Descartes, Molière, had the sap of the eighteenth century in them. Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, printed in 1697, suggested a method of warfare against absolutism, tradition, superstition, ignorance, though politically Bayle was not a conscious revolutionary. Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, in 1748, three years before the first number of the *Encyclopédie* and its militant rationalism, affirmed to those who could read that despotic Kings and potentates were an evil, their days numbered in the spread and growth of reason and the need for political regeneration and religious freedom; that the existing orders of State, Church and Society, resting on corrupt foundations, would totter and collapse: a notion already foreshadowed in Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques sur les anglais*. The rationalists had been impressed by the English Revolution, the Constitution of 1688, the establishing of a State on a contract, with its resolve that a breach of contract meant the forfeiture of the crown; and they preached subtly and intrepidly that a Constitution whereby the King would be a servant liable, as his ministers, to dismissal, could and should and must save France. Diderot, Helvétius, d'Alembert, Mably and others of that indomitable band, diffused their uncompromising and provocative theories; books like Morelly's *Code de la Nature*, Quesnay's *Tableau Economique*, the elder Mirabeau's *L'Ami des Hommes*, were read widely and discussed eagerly; and Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, and his more famous *Du Contrat Social*, with its impassioned abstractions and deductions, its opening pronouncement that men born free are nevertheless everywhere in chains, seemed to reveal a new gospel.

## ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTION

In the early days of the philosophers' campaign, there were considerable risks; but the movement proved inexhaustible, growing steadily, emerging into the open, protected by the few earnest, thoughtful men of the Court, such as Malesherbes, defining the irreparable breach between the government of France and the most notable writers; men always inquisitive and voluble, and in the van of a crusade for liberty, a struggle disastrous to the old order, creating the new. State and Church stood for the common enemy, and to Voltaire the Church was the more formidable of the two; or, rather, the persecuting spirit of religion, visible through history among Catholics, Protestants, Calvinists and the rest, most of them prepared to suffer martyrdom when they lacked the power to make martyrs of their heterodox fellows in the Church of Christ, with its message of Universal Brotherhood, Peace, Non-resistance to evil. Under the most Christian King Charles IX, the slaughter of Protestants by Catholics, known as the St Bartholomew Massacre, that extraordinary grace vouchsafed to Christendom, as Pope Gregory XIII said, caused more bloodshed in a score of days than the aggregate devilry of terrorising Jacobins in as many months; and the several religious sects appeared to Voltaire and his fellows as so many broods of wild animals set on exterminating each other, wherefore his resounding *Écrasez l'Infâme!* Annexation and aggrandisement wars of Kings seemed as fatal and hideous as that *Infâme* to those who saw mankind as so much prey for tigers and jackals; and crowds were roused at last to an indignation that made other tigers and jackals in the virulence of the Revolution; for it could be argued that all men were in danger of acting like beasts when enraged by conflict.

Kings and Queens and arrogant Church dignitaries were regarded as useless anachronisms by many intelligent Frenchmen who could reason, and by their unintelligent fellows who could only feel and suffer.

Anarchy muttered and stirred. Bankruptcy loomed like gathering storm-cloud over administration. Louis XVI had proved good by intention; but the reforms that had already destroyed certain feudal institutions emphasised the blight of those that remained. The Queen afforded a target for merciless scandal; ministers were in disgrace; and example abroad had quickened the nation, demonstrating how a country gathers itself together in a body and labours to unyoke itself. The American Rebellion, as Buckle wrote, fell like a spark on the inflammatory mass of Frenchmen and ignited a flame that never ceased its ravages till, for the instruction of mankind, it had left an awful lesson of the crimes into which oppression might hurry a generous, long-suffering people. The Declaration of American Independence and its complement, the Rights of Man, outpaced in thoroughness anything foreseen by the philosophers or hailed by the prophets. Americans had triumphed, enforcing Franklin's remark that the judgment of a whole people, a free people, had the character of infallibility. The French government, anxious perhaps to damage England rather than to help America, had played a part in that affair across the Atlantic, crippling her finance yet more gravely in consequence; and men like La Fayette, and others who would serve the Revolution, having battled in America and seen the lowering of the British flag, were fêted as heroes and apostles of liberty by their countrymen. France could examine the facts of a successful and established revolution, take profit therefrom, earlier hopes and aspirations, dim in outline, having now become tangible. America had captured the political imagination of Frenchmen. France too meant to have a Constitution, equality, freedom, though she would not Americanise herself nor transform government into a federal Republic.

The Revolution in its essentials was to begin, and continue, as a class war, and with the demand that every

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citizen should be the guardian of his own interests. The wealthier nobles were centralised at Court, impotent to direct though not to harm the King, unable to defend him or themselves, trained to idleness and luxury, beguiled by self-assurance, void of judgment and precision, neglecting their estates, amusing themselves with intrigue, the hunt, the play, gaming-tables. They philandered with the moral and political teachings and mordant satires of the philosophers, many having lost faith alike in the Monarchy and the Church. Most of the high clergy, in relation to the low, were akin to the nobles in relation to their dependants, abusing privilege, scamping or ignoring their pastoral duties; hence the low clergy had almost as many troubles as the people, of whom they were the sons, and would join with the Third Estate, the commons, against nobles and bishops when the States General met and became a National Assembly. Among that Third Estate, the industrialists who supplied the Court and enriched themselves so far as they could, extending a commerce hampered by governmental restrictions, had created a new distribution of wealth in the recent past, establishing themselves even as the nobles were fast ruining themselves. They resented the inferior legal status to which they were condemned, and the fact that a small destructive class should escape taxation and conserve the exclusive right of making laws for the rest; also that benefit and high place in State, Church, Army and general administration, should be reserved for aristocrats. The industrialists were resolved to govern themselves by right of their numbers and commercial ability, determined that the King should act for them and not against them; and the artisans and workers in the towns looked to their employers for protection, seeing their true representatives in them. The lawyers belonged to the Third Estate, and were to play a great and constructive part in the Revolution, having their own especial grievances, their designs, and vanities.



## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Napoleon, in one of his caustic moods, said that Vanity made the Revolution, that Liberty was only the pretext. Not a full-blooded truth, yet something of a half-truth; for many of the Third Estate wanted equality rather than liberty, actuated not so much by an earnest liberalism as by envy and a legitimate rancour.

The Army had its own plagues to gall patience, in addition to a share in the general, brawling distemper. Troops could no longer be trusted, and keen observers gave ominous warning. The artillery was efficient, the remainder of the service deplorably inefficient, led by aristocrats who, as a rule, were officers because they were aristocrats; fellows often intemperate, heedless to self-discipline and so unable to command discipline. Ney, Soult, Marceau, Hoche, Murat, and others, the future generals of the first Empire, were young men at the beginning of the Revolution, and commoners, most of them, unable to rise above the rank of sergeant, accordingly sullen, restive, not docile. Bonaparte likewise was a young man at this time, seemingly without a high military future, and in spiritual rebellion against France. The troops, meanly paid, ill-fed, bedraggled, were drawn largely from social riff-raff, deprived by a turbulent camp-life, yet courageous and the more dangerous when spurred to revolt by their own hardships and the exhortation of demagogues. Only hired foreign troops were trustworthy, faithful to their leaders and the Court; and they too risked infection at that fateful hour.

The energy and power in the France of 1789 lay with the people of France, not with its numbed and enfeebled Court, nor with the army staff; and the people were clamorous, about to break loose in a desperate attempt to make their own enigmatic future.

There are sincere publicists and thinkers who argue and insist that the French Revolution was a lamentable mistake, unnecessary, illogical, bestial; that if wrongs

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existed, they were in process of removal by an enlightened executive at the time of the Bastille fall and the first roar of strife; that peasants were becoming land-owners, and France prospered during the early years of Louis XVI's reign. Others see in the Revolution the destiny of France, and humanity, unshunnable, as logical as a proposition in Euclid, aware of Burke's dogma that the revolts of a people are always provoked.

## CHAPTER II

### MIRABEAU; AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

#### I

ON May 4, 1789, the highways from Paris to Versailles and the lanes from the neighbouring towns and villages were enlivened with vehicles, and folk astride and afoot, hurrying onward and eagerly in one direction; and presently, in the Royal town, a solid mass of men and women lined the way from the church of St Louis to the church of Notre Dame. The windows to the houses overlooking the scene had been hired like boxes at a play, and roofs, chimneys, points of vantage, served as gallery. The deputies recently elected to the States-General, nobles, clergy, and the commons or Third Estate, a new trinity, had forgathered at Notre Dame soon after seven o'clock in the morning to await the King, before marching in procession to St Louis, where they would be sermonised by the Bishop of Nancy; and the vast crowd had assembled to see and to acclaim at least a section of that procession.

Louis XVI, heavy and slow, was usually late on occasions of State, and on this most hopeful day the States General and the folk had to waste hours, expecting him. A deputy muttered to another that one man ought not to keep a whole nation waiting in such fashion. Formerly, Kings had taken their absolute, unprotested way in affairs great and small, whereas now they were to be censured like indolent servants. However, the majority of the people were ready to wait in their joyous excitement and cordial gratitude; for the States General, dispersed in 1614, had again and at last become a visible reality and might soon be at stern legislative work, overriding old precedent and forging



MIRABEAU  
(Versailles)



new principles in the dolorous need to establish a Constitution. The optimists in their confidence and enthusiasm believed the nation could now deliberate and govern itself; the people were roused throughout the land, sure that equality held promise for all, and liberty would follow, creating a heaven on earth. The King, they no doubt argued, had been cradled in luxury, pampered by flunkies, misled by greedy, inane counsellors; a kindly, dilatory fellow suffering at times from dyspepsia, and damned in a fair wife; but he had shown himself as a true patriot, a noble father to his loyal people, more anxious for their welfare than for his own.

Louis had convoked the States General, in January, not for the purpose of building a Constitution. France was bankrupt, and only a States General might be able to reorganise the country and stabilise finance, if France could by any power on earth be reorganised and stabilised, other diverse measures having failed, drastically. The *Parlement* of Paris had won an ephemeral, a stolen popularity, refusing to do its imposed duty and sanction edicts. They demanded the States General as the only national body competent to deal with the situation; though in truth the magistrates, resisting taxation and judicial reforms, were actuated by hatred of the King's ministers and a jealousy of Assemblies other than their own. They wanted to protect their traditional interests and the aristocracy, scheming to maintain privilege as it chanced to suit them, the magistrates. The *Parlement* was exiled for its obstinacy, then recalled in answer to popular resentment; could not save the country, nor itself finally. And so the poor harried King, in fear and despair, had been driven to summon a States General, confessing to Necker that he needed a guide, having suffered betrayal alike from magistrates and nobles and prelates. In the meantime, instructed citizens were asked to make suggestion for the betterment of France, and anyone who thought he

had notions of statecraft, and could get them printed and sold, produced his script. Thus government paraded its inability to govern: a fact known and discussed by every intelligent man in France.

There was wordy conflict over the vexatious question as to how a States General ought to be constituted: should the Third Estate make one of three groups equal in number, subordinate to nobles and clergy acting in concert to outvote them, or should they be double the one and the other order, consequently a power? Louis agreed that the commons should in fact have double the number of one and the other rival group; and France rejoiced exceedingly. The minor clergy and the provincial gentry were to have part in the legislature, and citizens foresaw that the more humble of the privileged classes would incline to the Third Estate rather than to their own leaders. That the three orders should deliberate and vote as one Assembly, compact and indivisible, was not publicly determined, though announcements to this effect were expected. That the three orders should vote separately had been determined secretly by the Court and the ministry. Herein lay combustible stuff for early explosion.

The elections on a broad, democratic franchise for deputies and, in the event of need, their substitutes, duly took place, and one thousand two hundred and fourteen successful candidates, including six hundred and twenty-one commoners, were eventually to assemble at Versailles, the King on account of his passion for the hunt having refused to accept Paris as the rightful home for such a body, assuming he must be in close attendance to watch and, he hoped, firmly to control the States General, not yet aware that he had virtually abdicated as a monarch. The deputies were furnished with written instructions, *cahiers de doléances*, memorials of grievances; the word of France, including complaints against unequal taxation, privilege, feudal laws, *lettres de cachet*, judicial anomalies; all the abuses of the past, together

with demands for equality of rights, a national sovereignty, a Constitution.

The nobles, at Versailles, were divided, a small minority expressing a need for widespread reform, others being prepared for a less unequal taxation and no further limitation of privilege. The clergy were likewise divided. The commons were undivided, most of them not yet having taken rank for or against the artisans, workers, the Fourth Estate. The nobles and high clergy had much to lose and very little to gain from a new system of government; the commons, and in especial the industrialists, had little to lose, all to gain, and were a corporate body, hostile and intractable, leagued to resist opposition and to affirm themselves. And they made the Revolution.

When Louis on that spring morning honoured the occasion by arriving, ceremonies began and the Third Estate in plain black mantles and white cravats led the way from Notre Dame, proud of themselves and their imagined future, warmly cheered by the crowd; then came the nobles and the clergy in their finery, some of them oppressed by their own pomp and the sudden quiet of the people. The Archbishop of Paris in his sacerdotal grandeur preceded the King and Queen, the Princes and Princesses of the Blood, resplendent, stately in their royal mummary; and the onlookers broke out anew, spontaneously acclaiming Louis, ignoring Marie-Antoinette, the unfortunate woman playing her part that day.

A deputy among the Third Estate, distinguished from the rest by his immense head and thick, black hair, drew attention and provoked a thrill; a tall fellow, square, heavy, and like a Samson, said Madame de Staël, Necker's daughter, who watched from a window; his eyes aflame, face seamed and marred, borrowing new expression from its very ugliness, his whole person giving the idea of an irregular force, such as one would figure in a Tribune of the People. He was the most



notorious man on show, accused openly of all the ordinary human sins, of violating public and private life; surreptitiously accused of un-nameable things, and of intent at parricide, brigandage, envy and ingratitude, cheater; stared at now as one who had journeyed from prison to prison, chased by his sire, his innumerable creditors, by enemies and friends, living as he did in a sooty thick whirl of scandal year by year, nevertheless having repute as an incomparable orator, a queller of riots, a Friend of the People, a writer chock-full of threats. Here was Honoré-Gabriel Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau, deputy for Aix, now in his forty-first year, stalking boldly in spite of sly murmurs and unfriendly glances; unabashed, holding that leonine head erect on his broad shoulders and bull-like neck, swinging his stout thews as if he would march direct and at once to supreme power over commons and clergy and nobles and Princes and Kings before upturning heaven in his audacity. And Mirabeau assuredly meant to stride to power; for he personified most things that had been in the France of the last half-century, and many things that would be in the imminent years of tumult, at once the eighteenth century and the Revolution incarnate; and his record from that day to the day of his death, two years later, typified the history of the States General and its transition from a National to a Constituent Assembly.

## II

The Mirabeaus had a transmitted and incurable taste for renown, and claimed descent by a Riquetti of Marseilles from the Arrighettis, a Florentine clan exiled at the time of the Guelph-Ghibelline quarrels. The genealogy was highly romantic, but the Mirabeaus were in effect worthy of such ancestry, Renaissance types in spirit, ready and eager to fight among themselves when there were no common enemies to distract attention, to

weld them together. A Jean Riquetti bought a dismantled old fortress, the Château de Mirabeau, in Provence, added the name to that of the family; and a later Mirabeau won the title of Marquis for himself and his progeny. Thus Revolution Mirabeau, a man of the Midi, had burning sun in his veins; quick to take offence, to strike, equally quick to pardon if his vanity had escaped too severe a scald; dramatic by temperament, able to laugh and weep both in a breath, fearless, irascible, tingling from heels to scalp; a true son of his father, the *Ami des Hommes* Marquis, a replica of his grandsire, Jean-Antoine; who, at the battle of Cassano, being charged to defend a bridge, had made history for himself. Jean-Antoine, said report, took twenty-seven wounds in defence of that bridge: a gunshot broke his arm, and with the help of his teeth he slung it in a handkerchief, and continued to fight until another bullet sliced his neck, severing the artery. In the ensuing flight of his now leaderless men, and the enemy rush, he was trampled by a regiment of cavalry, his head protected by a camp-kettle, thanks to a resourceful sergeant. A miracle of surgery fixed Jean-Antoine's head on his neck by means of a silver stock, and the broken old fellow, known as *Col-d'argent*, lived to rage at tax-collectors and Court functionaries, to wed a young and noble lady and beget children before he "died" a second time, finally now; at which hour the young and noble lady had aged, demoralised by a curious form of erotic mania.

Jean-Antoine's son produced Gabriel, planting the spirit of the warrior in the lad, together with some taint of that erotic mania. The Marquis subsisted as most of the Mirabeaus, fractious with his near and distant neighbours, railing at the evils and ineptitudes of the Court, scolding the world when he was not writing books and pamphlets to demonstrate the natural goodness of man and to promote a universal brotherhood. His wife, also strangely erotic, a disorderly, hysterical

poor creature, wrangled with him and he tyrannised over her, hated her family, despising and embracing her in a protracted hot alternation. He had her close-shut by *lettre de cachet*, his usual method when teased past endurance by dependants and others, having influence enough with government to obtain nearly sixty of those prison-tickets during his sultry life. He fought his lady and her family in the courts over inheritance and succession, trusting to her riches, deprived of them; lost his case, saw no more of her, spoke no more of her save by way of anathema, the marriage having bred eleven children in little more than as many years. Of those who survived, Gabriel perturbed his sire from the day of his birth until the old man knew that his son would rank among the most famous of the family. The Marquis, like the father of Frederick the Great, had resolved to mould his lad to his own relentless will; and the young man meant to shape himself to his own will, as later he sought to fashion the National Assembly, and the Court, and France.

The Marquis, at his Bignon home in March, 1749, had word from the women not to be afraid when the new baby, the fifth, and heir, lay ready for paternal inspection: a brat, the father said, as ugly as Satan, huge at the head, twisted at the feet, and with teeth showing at his gums, as if already he had need to bite; and his tongue seemed useless, enmeshed in filament. The limbs soon grew straight, the tongue loose, the mouth noisy; but the ugliness had additions from smallpox and foolish treatment on the part of the half-crazy, infatuate mother. That face was pitted and furrowed like a weather-beaten gargoyle till Mirabeau's death. The exuberance of the infant amazed the father and affrighted the nurses. Nature had endowed him with a prodigious store of life-force and the indefatigable will to grapple and live. No measure in the child, the youth, the man, neither for weal nor woe; all things superabundant, in vice as in virtue, in power and talent;

no enduring discipline within or without; always vivid sunshine or swollen black thunder-cloud in Mirabeau's life. His audacity of head and heart scorned obstacle and rebuke, was seldom touched and then but lightly with repentance, though there were occasional melodramas of sorrow and pain in him: a creature strenuous and alert, born to confront the impossible, never to submit to frustration, yet again and again defeated; and something at once monstrous and angelic at the dark core of his being. Young Mirabeau suffered cruel punishments, ineffective and repeated; then the despotic Marquis, weary from exhaustion in the strained effort to curb and manage his son, packed him hence, telling him to go devilward, making a feeble pretence at indifference.

Tutors had failed to win any respect from him, and he went like a juvenile criminal to a friend of the Marquis; whom he soon cajoled, even now able to steal the affection and intermittent admiration of all associates, except his irate, drill-sergeant of an enlightened father. The Marquis decided that his boy was unworthy the family name and should be Pierre-Buffières, so called from an estate belonging to his mother, till he should redeem himself and recover the honour of being known as a Mirabeau. He was enrolled at a military *pension*, continuing his mad pranks, disgracing himself, learning Greek and Latin, developing his restless, keen mind and a fondness for general literature and mathematics, though never at any time skilled in logic. Thence he went for further instruction to a man reputably harsh and in command of a regiment at Saintes; where a year's military work, and gambling, truancy, and the beginnings of his countless whorages, led to a renewed onslaught. Mirabeau felt sting from the first of the many *lettres de cachet* issued against him in the spread of years on behalf of his father, and was imprisoned at the Isle of Rhé. His new gaoler, soon won to favour, spoke for him; and Pierre-Buffières had

leave to join the infantry and go soldiering and fighting in Corsica; to his plenteous joy, and with goodwill from his uncle, Bailly Mirabeau, the most reasonable and least ungentele of the elders, he too watching the incorrigible scapegrace, anxious for him, earnest in talk and correspondence. If the young man did not prove worse than Nero, Bailly Mirabeau wrote, he would outpace Marcus Aurelius.

## III

Mirabeau quitted himself bravely in Corsica, his single military adventure, certain he would become a great soldier, which was not true; declaring he had been born for war, which incontrovertibly was true. He returned to France, spent a summer in Provence, reconciled for a while to his father, carrying his name proudly; an industrious young squire attending to the property, studying land, agriculture, drainage, and always his fellows; and he worked at manuscripts begun in Corsica, his brain like a topsy-turvy library, his father said. The Marquis, as he tried to manage the mouth of this fiery animal of a son, presently had other irritations, living apart from his wife and with his mistress, disordered at the death of Madame de Vassan, his rich mother-in-law. Several families were involved, at enmity with each other, all rapacious and fighting for themselves; and young Mirabeau, his brother and sisters, were divided in their sympathies, the one side aiding the Marquis, the other the Marquise in the squabbles and snares favourable at last to the lady.

Mirabeau, skilled in intrigue, if not yet a master of that shady low art, served now and again as an intermediary between his parents, false to one and the other in attention to his own gain, contemptuous of both, for the most elementary decencies were ignored in the wretched family affair; and about this time, behaving on the

Provençal estate in the manner of a privileged lord, he took a sharp lesson from the dependants and local officials, men with revolution-germs stirring in them. The young man had wisdom enough to recover the ground lost in popular esteem, and thenceforth seldom violated his better instincts concerning that sort of feudal tyranny, envisaging wreck for his own hereditary class, induced now to take the humane, progressive way of political development. Yet he had been rebuked; and, smarting, he began to visit Aix for distraction and amusement, and launched himself gaily on a new, unmilitary campaign.

Mlle de Marignane, daughter and heir to a wealthy Marquis, lived in the town; a woman of eighteen, much besought, flattered, and already promised in wedlock. Mirabeau decided to have that woman as the only means of acquiring riches. He took her and her father and Aix by storm, aware that a penurious fellow like himself could attain his unscrupulous end only by compromising the young woman. In a little time he had subjected her to a battery of honeyed persuasion, using all the powers of seduction natural to him; and he did indeed compromise her. He announced the fact brutally to her father; who had her married forthwith. In the thick of much pomp and some foul gossip, Mirabeau, now twenty-three, became spouse to the irresponsible and entrapped lady, assuming he had made end to his financial and other troubles. He named himself later an athlete in the game of love; and with Mlle de Marignane he had striven like a Hercules, deliberate and systematic, using even his facial ugliness as an asset, he admitted, indomitable when there was a woman to inveigle and a fortune to win. However, the lady's noble father showed no readiness to play banker to his prodigal son-in-law; and therefore, since Mirabeau as a husband had extravagant whims and his allowance from his unwealthy father and his wife's relatives was small, he incurred huge debts within fifteen months,

already out of love with his wife, never having been properly in love.

The elder Mirabeau, raging at his son's limitless demands on life, at his follies and iniquities, though disposed to shield him from public ignominy, came to the rescue with a command extracted from government by seigneurial influence, and the debtor found himself under the hand of the King, consequently sheltered from judicial proceedings and creditors, such rogueries being possible, even frequent, among the privileged before the Revolution. There were no shreds of remorse in Mirabeau; and he boasted of his timely aid from Court, though by the terms of exile he must remain in the close vicinity of his château. Then he went to Manosque, expelled from his recent home; and soon after, by yet another order, this too contrived by family councils, he was officially declared incapable of managing his own affairs, and in perpetuity, hence safe from pursuit for debt while the interdiction lasted. He objected to this latest disgrace, but never made any serious effort to have the interdiction removed; and so he was immune from one specific mass of debts until his death.

He quickly lost any shame he may have felt, began to search for new conquests and excitements, polygamous by instinct, never able to be faithful to one woman, periodically more of a questing animal than a rational being in the matter of sex. His wife also had a lover, a handsome young musketeer, who frequented the house as a friend of the husband. She had had an unequivocal letter from him. Mirabeau, suspicious, managed to get hold of it, went to his wife, ablaze with indignation. She thought he might strangle her. She knelt, wept, confessed, pleading in the name of their infant son. Mirabeau, sensitive to all piteous creatures, and afraid of his own wrath, decided to postpone action for a few days. He kept an incriminating letter, broke the exile-ban soon after, leaving Manosque to make a

journey and arrange a marriage for his repentant wife's lover; and the most curious fact of this shabby affair was that he succeeded. On his way home, he visited his sister, the Marquise de Cabris, at Grasse; a genuine Mirabeau, thriftless, impetuous, deep in cabals and intrigue. There was talk of incest at this stage of his vehement career; groundless scandal probably. He and his sister were staunch friends, and his arrival led to banquets, picnics, imbrolios; and a quarrel with a foolish and impudent old aristocrat, enemy of Mirabeau's sister. The pair scuffled and rolled together while the others of a pleasure-party looked on and laughed heartily. No serious physical harm befell anyone, though an umbrella had been damaged on the back of one or the other wrestler. Gossip thrived, social feuds and slander quickened, Mirabeau fled. The old gentleman sought help from high administrative friends and obtained a decree of arrest against Mirabeau on the ground of attempted slaughter.

Mirabeau's father saved his son by a *lettre de cachet*, and in September 1774, the young man arrived with a guard at the Château d'If, his latest ordained prison. He stayed here long enough to enchant his gaoler, seduce the canteen-keeper's daughter, and add to his manuscripts, beginning a treatise on Mythology; went thence to the Joux Fort, an owl's nest with a few invalids, as he said, in the Jura mountains, again by influence and order of the incessantly vigilant and now exasperated Marquis de Mirabeau. His wife, tired of her husband and his outbursts and escapades, his debts, exiles, imprisonments, ceased to think of him and turned elsewhere for amusement and comfort.

M. de Saint-Mauris, Mirabeau's new gaoler, fell under the charm of his eloquent prisoner; a much accomplished persuader of men as well as a perilous seducer of women. He might wander round and about the Fort, cross the border into Switzerland, read and continue his writings; and he arranged with a Swiss



publisher for the printing of his *Essai sur le despotisme*, finished at Manosque, in which he scourged the government for its tyranny and stupidity and gave revolutionary warning to Kings. He visited Pontarlier, the neighbouring town, alone or with the accommodating and at the moment amiable Saint-Mauris; and in Pontarlier he met the famous Sophie of the *Lettres*, most tragic of Mirabeau's numerous lovers, most fatal of devoted women for him.

## IV

Saint-Mauris had not lost a taste for gallant adventure, though in his sixties, and he tried to be agreeable to the young wife of the avaricious and wealthy Marquis de Monnier, a high official at Pontarlier. The lady panted for a gay life and liberty, indifferent to her sexagenarian husband and aged men in general. She had heard of Mirabeau and his exploits, and wanted to see this legendary hero, urged Saint-Mauris to bring him to the house. Mirabeau met Sophie de Monnier, and paid court to her in his customary, downright fashion. Already she had been guilty of emotional infidelity to her spouse. Mirabeau was encouraged. Sophie wished at first to spice the amorous game in the manner of Rousseau's platonic heroines; but this bloodless romancing did not please the lusty Mirabeau. Once again he evinced his influence over feverous young women; and now he loved greatly, and Sophie verily believed she would rejoice to give her life for him. Saint-Mauris was snubbed or ignored by the ravishing and ravished woman, lost all sympathy with his prisoner, and began to play harsh gaoler, anxious to cool the crazy pair; and the infatuated old husband remained tranquil for a while, easily duped in his morbid vanities. Presently, official hue and cry for the anonymous writer of the *Essai sur le despotisme* enlivened the district. Saint-Mauris knew the facts, professed alarm for his

credit as a gaoler, and said that henceforth Mirabeau must not go from the Fort. However, the young man gained leave for a last visit to Pontarlier; and he did not return.

He spent several days and nights in Sophie's bedroom, hiding in a wardrobe when anyone other than his lady approached; but he had to eat, his appetite for food, for most things of the flesh, was astonishing, suspicions were aroused, peril increased. He left the wardrobe and concealed himself in the town, playing Romeo to Sophie's Juliet of a night, cozening the husband; so for a month, when the lovers resolved to elope. The husband began to stare and blink, took fright, sent his wife for rigorous protection to Dijon. Mirabeau followed her. Plots, counterplots, retreats, evasions, resulted in the final escape of Sophie from her male and female wardens. The husband appealed to authority in his shame and disgust. Mirabeau's father set spies at the heels of his elusive son. Sophie and Mirabeau, nowise dispirited, barely escaped arrest, and at length managed to reach apparent safety in Holland.

The husband started an action against Mirabeau and Sophie, for rape, seduction, adultery; and after much delay, Mirabeau was condemned to have his head struck off, and Sophie to imprisonment in a house of correction. If he had been a commoner, no doubt he would have lost his head in fact, not only in effigy; but the judgment, nominal in the matter of death, was yet serious for him, and meant prison at the beck of the father, and others, if the son could be overtaken. Extradition orders were besought and obtained from authority in Holland, proceedings that covered nearly twelve months; in all likelihood the happiest known to Mirabeau. Sophie had jewels with her, and money stolen from her husband. When these resources disappeared, Mirabeau set to work in his undaunted assurance for the Amsterdam booksellers, doing much

hack-work, writing his one-time famous, truculently enlightened *Avis aux Hessois*, and other minor things of the sort, together with satirical and cynical pamphlets against his father and hypocritical philosophers, friends of men, who imprisoned their wives and sons and lived like Grand Turks. Sophie too worked tirelessly, animated and glowing, a dutiful good housewife, yet enamoured to ecstasy of her lover. When they were arrested she thought of poisoning herself, perplexed in the extreme. Mirabeau begged her to have courage, and faith in him and his cunning and hopes. She was taken under escort, and three months gone with child, to the house of correction. He went to the sinister prison of Vincennes at Paris, where he remained for upwards of four years, again at the command of his implacable father.

The first months of the Vincennes imprisonment might have crushed the spirit of most men: no communication with anyone but the gaolers, no chance of spending an hour outside the walls of the dungeon; no substantial feeding, no decent clothing, little space in which to move, less fresh air and light; and no books at first other than prison stock, no paper for writing. Mirabeau, yoked to misery, took lessons in patience, and used the power and subtlety of his tongue on the governor, pleaded in endless notes to his father, threatening suicide, and to the Court, when allowed a pen. He succeeded in getting most of the innumerable books he wanted, and permission to write at will, to take air in the garden or on the walls. He worked as if he would kill himself, and in truth nearly blinded himself, never properly recovering good sight: translations, essays literary and political, a tragedy, comedies, a history, a treatise on Tolerance, a memoir on *Lettres de cachet*, another on Despotism, and one or two obscene works hot from the furnace of his erotic and hampered imagination; these, together with the renowned letters to Sophie, voluminous, pathetic, tearful,

raging, here and there also streaked and tainted with obscenity; and he read more than he wrote, establishing his wide, loose knowledge of men and things.

He was permanently diseased at kidneys and bladder before he left Vincennes, suffering acute colics, pains in head and eyes and limbs; yet fattening by some strange law of his physical being. His wife had nothing to do with him, though she wrote to his sire, duly informing the Marquis of the death of her son, the only Mirabeau heir-male. That fact lamed the Marquis in his family pride and led to Mirabeau's freedom, since the father hoped that wife and husband might breed another son to perpetuate a name otherwise lost; a groundless hope, as it proved in the dingy sequel. The Marquis vowed he would deny his son and refused to support him. Mirabeau was free, and beggared. He hastened to his desolate Sophie; but the flame of that love had dwindled in Mirabeau, and the pair had their hell of jealousy, and parted. She lingered, free now, sorrowing through years, revived, lost her final lover; and this time she did commit suicide, found in her lodging, arms and legs tied to a chair near to a charcoal-stove.

Mirabeau determined to seek a reconciliation with his wife in his need for money; but as the start of an imagined march to fame and as preparation for regaining civil rights over his wife, he had to put himself in law, to gain a revision of the Monnier verdict. He had an interview with and a lopped forgiveness from his father, though yet having to fend for himself in supplies. Then he posted to Pontarlier and voluntary imprisonment, whence he might contest the earlier verdict against him; and he fought, humiliating witnesses, frightening judges, disgracing the Monnier family and their auxiliaries, rousing tumult and popular demonstration in his favour; and husband and magistrates and lawyers dreaded further scenes and confessions and shameful exposures and were glad to be rid of

their prisoner, annulling sentence. Mirabeau went on his way triumphant, braced now to fight his wife in court; for she had stubbornly refused a reconciliation or breeding, and had applied for legal separation from him.

## V

He sold manuscripts and, with cash in his pocket, took post for Aix, to plead for judgment and the return of his wife before a bench packed against him by influence of her family; and he spoke for hours at a time, confronted with accusations from his past, with written invectives from his father. The old Marquis attempted to stop proceedings, scared by the whelp he had sired, no doubt longing to send everybody concerned to prison by *lettres de cachet*. Mirabeau stood at bay, exposing his own secrets, his wife's, anybody's secret; and his rhetorical, dramatic zeal, his anger and disdain, overreached itself as he lashed accusers and especially his wife's father. Then he railed at privilege and corrupt jurists; and he read his wife's old confessional letter, to prove she was a baggage; lost his case, won a vulgar fame that loaded him with repute as an assailant of tyranny, abuse, treachery. Now Mirabeau was a proven orator, able to marshal facts, less potent in debate or sustained argument; and so he continued to the end of his life, never finally and wholly victorious, hindered by his need to pour out all that was in him and be done. A few years were to pass before these facts would exercise and trouble political France and Europe; meanwhile the scenes at Aix had almost severed him from his own class, prompting him to seek aid elsewhere.

He began the quest in Paris, reverted to polemical writings, spent what money he had, whored a little by the way, filched cash from his mother; and he met a

sensible young woman, Madame de Nehra, speedily overcoming a tepid resistance, so that ere long she took oath to exist only for him, to suffer anything and follow him anywhere. They stayed a few months in England and he was fired by the example of the young and masterly Pitt, and met Sheridan, Fox, Burke, adding to his store of political and economic wisdom, scribbling diversely. He went home impulsively, in debt as usual, and with the design to be the William Pitt of France, and sprang headlong into political conflict, attacking the King's ministry, publishing five books in as many months, adding to his notoriety as a man dangerous to incompetent statesmen and obtuse finance-controllers, intriguing covertly with the authorities he reproved openly, always in search of official recognition and a post governmental or ambassadorial. He visited Prussia and fancied he might sell himself to the government, having failed at home; travelled to Paris, left again, charged with a mission at the Court of Berlin, an amphibious diplomat, as he named himself; in fact, a secret agent instructed by minister Calonne; who had decided that Mirabeau was fast becoming too vexatious in Paris and sent him abroad, hoping thus to take sting from him.

Frederick the Great's successor was in office, and Mirabeau addressed a memoir to him, offering instruction to the executive, urging the new King to renounce military grandeur and to promote liberty and a true citizenship. He wrote endless, politically invaluable letters, memoirs and documents to Talleyrand, for transmission to Calonne, and was artful enough to retain copies, selling them later when news of the imminent States General had lured him to France and he wanted money, brazen in his perfidy, revealing State secrets, embroiling his masters with the Prussian Court; nor could men like Talleyrand, Calonne, Necker, ever trust or easily tolerate him thereafter. Always a need of money goaded him and frequently

degraded him; and on this occasion the low business took dirt from an affair with his publisher's wife. Madame de Nehra had been loyal to him in their hectic wanderings; now, however, she left him, unable longer to endure his erotic saltations. At this hour in his precipitate stride graveward, Mirabeau thought he knew more of abstract statesmanship than the majority of men in France, and he increased his fame, publishing the solid and discursive *De la monarchie prussienne*; a work not solely his, produced by collaboration, as most of his books, pamphlets, journals, and speeches, so until his death; for always he had skilled men at work on his behalf, teeming as he was with ideas, possessed of a talent for stimulating other brains, co-ordinating results in a uniform whole, plagiarizing at will.

He went to the family property in Provence, spurred to gain election to the States General as a deputy among the nobles; but his peers during the preliminary elections were ashamed of him and his record and expelled him from conference on the technical ground that he was not an actual possessor of a fief. He turned from them, repeating that the nobles with their detested privilege were the real enemies of the people, and of the King. They had forced him to become a tribune of the people in spite of himself. He took sides with the commons at Aix, needed money for his election campaign and had much profit from the heinous publication of the Berlin correspondence, beginning war on privilege in the name of the people and a Constitutional Monarchy, never at any time having been touched with Republicanism, nor impassioned for outright democracy. A mad dog, was he! Well, let the people elect him, and despotism and privilege should die of his bite!

About this time the people of Marseilles broke into rebellion, wanting food, pillaging for it, flouting authority. Away went Mirabeau to the town; and he

harangued the crowds and took charge of local government. The military commandant told him to do whatsoever his heart and his power should dictate for the public weal; and this recognition intoxicated him. He formed a militia among the folk, soothed mobs with the promise of the States General, restoring order, and had to return to Aix to deal with a similar outbreak. Here the crowds hailed him, kissing his hands, almost worshipping him. He was elected for Aix by a huge majority, for Marseilles by a lesser majority, chose to represent the Third Estate of Aix, and set out for Versailles, accompanied as far as Avignon by devoted supporters. He was sure he understood and would quell the disruptive forces at work in France as he had appeased the rioters at Marseilles and Aix; that he and he alone could save the Monarchy, point the way to the abolition of privilege and the suppression of reactionary nobles, cleanse and re-establish the ministry and give commercial prosperity to the land, exercising a statesmanship learned by often desperate experience, by unceasing labour.

## VI

When Mirabeau strode in the procession from Notre Dame to St Louis at Versailles on May 4, there were signs of disapproval; and the next day, at the first sitting of the States General, he was hissed, and knew what he must confront and overcome if he would impress and govern his fellows. The nobles despised him as a renegade; the clergy shunned him as a disturbing rascal who had drawn public attention with the vociferous tale of his marital and other shames; the Third Estate accused him of ambition and corruption; the ministry, the executive in France until Louis' fall, avoided him as a faithless adventurer; the King mistrusted him, the Queen hated him. Peril and contumely had served in the past as a whetstone



to much that was vital and courageous, sometimes noble, in him; and they were so to serve in the tempest about to break.

The situation on that opening day of the States General was summarized thus: a King without volition, ministers without character or genius, a government in distress, a magistracy in conflict; an army without discipline, a nobility jealous of its unjust privilege, a bourgeoisie strung to conquer power; and unrest in the towns, anxiety in the country, misery broadcast, sedition and brigandage rampant. The deputies had been called to extract financial order from this chaos, and took possession of the *Salles des Menus Plaisirs*, the vast hall being arranged for the commons, two other apartments for nobles and clergy when deliberating separately; and whether the groups should vote as one or as three, whether the Third Estate should be powerful or powerless in legislation, was the first teasing problem for immediate solution.

On the opening day the public gallery had its excited crowd, and the space given to the courtiers a tittering cluster of aristocrats, who regarded the scene as yet another comic and quite harmless charade. The session had been called for eight o'clock of the morning. Deputies had to wait two hours before the King arrived, the Third Estate having been hemmed in a dingy corridor, not so the others. Louis instructed the Keeper of the Seals to speak for him, to name reforms proper for consideration by such an Assembly, to announce that the Orders were free to determine if they should sit and vote together or apart: a first grievous disappointment for the Third Estate, who knew the nobles could be brought into united debate only by command of the King. Necker, timid and reticent in his good intention, read a laborious and pedantic report on the state of the finances, naming expedients rather than serious reforms, dissembling in his figures; nor did he offer anything useful in the

matter of separate or joint voting: a yet more grievous disappointment, and the beginning of Necker's slow decline in popularity. So the day ended. Many deputies went off, predicting calamity, Louis and his ministry having alike failed at initial opportunity.

Mirabeau's hope and belief that the King would straightway declare for the nation in opposition to old abuse, leading the nation, fell from him, and his malevolence against the nobles and the ministry had nourishment.

Before anything could be done in the way of legislation, the deputies had to verify their powers as a body, admitting and registering each member. Struggle ensued promptly. The Third Estate refused to act alone; the nobles and numbers of the clergy refused to act in concert; an inert executive offered no lead: hence deadlock. Meanwhile the First and Second Estate sat in private, the Third in public, allied with the people, demonstrably acting for them, seeing themselves as a sovereign people, with the King as their servant. The enlightened, conservative Malouet, a man honourable and just, proposed that the commons should send a deputation to persuade the nobles and clergy to join them. The liberal Mounier, deep versed in politics and pledged to reforms, disliking revolutions though not yet frightened, said that to admit argument at this pass might damage the claim of his fellows. The next day Mirabeau made his first speech, suggesting in his cunning that they should be passive, aware that public opinion and time would serve them handsomely. Mounier now upheld Malouet, impatient with Mirabeau, and conferences began, lapsed, were renewed as weeks sped. The nobles were obstinate, sullen, immovable, the clergy at odds among themselves. On June 10, Sieyès, at the instigation of Mirabeau, moved that the Third Estate should once again and finally ask the two Orders to unite in a verification of powers, while declaring that they themselves would

verify at once. Two days later, astronomer Bailly, academician, pensioner of the King, and a cautious though earnest liberal, acting as *doyen*, became provisional President, and verification began. The commons spent three days discussing a name, and by a large and bold majority they elected to call themselves the National Assembly, in face of Mirabeau's anxiety to protect the authority of the Crown and choose a less provocative title: the first act of the Revolution, denying separate electoral existence to the remaining Orders, and in line with the notion that the representatives of twenty-five millions should and must prevail over the representatives of two hundred thousand. The Third Estate braved the Crown, technically and legally in the wrong. They were assured that the bulk of the clergy must soon be with them; and they extended their audacity by announcing that taxes not specifically approved should cease to be collected on the day when for any reason whatever this National Assembly might be forced to disperse: grave threat to the Crown.

Mirabeau was disquieted, reluctant to force an issue at this stage, wanting to believe that the King sympathized with the Third Estate rather than with recalcitrant nobles defending their own privileges by right of tradition, purchase, inheritance; whereas Louis hesitated between Necker, who urged him to liberal measures, and reactionary ministers hotly encouraged by the Princes, the Queen, the high nobility, bishops, judges, who were stern against joint deliberation of the three Orders and resisted drastic reform. The King chose in part and momentarily to follow reaction, vexed by the illegalities and temper of the commons.

On June 19, the clergy at last decided by a narrow majority to join the Third Estate; and the nobles voted an address to Louis, condemning the attitude of the commons. About that time, the King was prevailed on by his friends to annul Third Estate resolutions,

and to hold something of a *lit de justice*, stating and imposing his will for the future. He ordered that the hall should be closed so that preparations might be made for his comminatory visit, thus interrupting the work of the Assembly; nor did he give formal notice to Bailly, failing in courtesy at that hour. On the 20th, de Brézé, Grand Master of Ceremonies, sent belated word to Bailly that the heralds were about to proclaim a Royal Session. Bailly nevertheless went with his colleagues to their hall. They found the doors shut against them. Troops with fixed bayonets were in attendance. After protests and parleys and some angry confusion and dismay, the Third Estate took possession of the covered tennis-court nearby. A door laid across two barrels served as presidential table, the secretaries using a carpenter's bench; nor would Bailly accept the solitary chair, deputies being forced to stand. Several of them wished to adjourn to Paris, and safe deliberation, and were outvoted. Mounier moved that they should take irrevocable oath not to separate as a representative body till a Constitution had been established on solid foundation; and he soon regretted his proposal. The oath was taken, signatures were appended, with only one dissentient. The royal Session had been announced for the 22nd, then postponed for a day, since there were doubts and divided council among ministers, and Louis continued to hover: a fatal postponement, for on the 22nd the Third Estate sat in the church of St Louis, and the majority of the clergy, led by five bishops and two nobles, joined them, giving victory to the commons.

The next day, nobles and clergy had direct admission to the hall, now ready for the Royal Session. The Third Estate were compelled to wait outside in a rain-storm, and within sight of troops and a sympathetic, restless crowd; so until the arrival of the King, who received no cheers that day. His Speech, after he had explained his purpose, added to the gloomy resentment

of the commons; for it was dictatorial, read by the Secretary of State, decreeing that the three Orders must remain separate, although they might talk together now and again when mutually agreed and with permission from the King. Earlier decisions of the Third Estate were rescinded, the form to be given to the next States General must not be debated, nor anything in respect of feudal property and privilege. Secretary number two then read a declaration of the King's intentions, promising no new taxes or loans without consent of the States General, forgoing prerogative to that extent; immunities from taxation should cease, personal servitude would be suppressed; *lettres de cachet* might be discussed, also some provision for liberty of the press and law reform, army reform, though the King reserved full authority to himself. Louis announced that if the States General refused to help him, he himself would ensure the happiness of his people. He told the three Orders to go each to its own chamber, closed the Session, and departed. Most of the nobles and some of the clergy went after him. The first part of the Speech had outraged the Third Estate. His projected reforms were ignored. The commons had already lost trust in Louis. They did not leave the hall. The Marquis de Brézé came to them in gala dress, escorted by a military guard. He ordered them to disperse forthwith: they knew his master's intention.

Until this fateful hour, Mirabeau had held to his theory of a reforming King, a Royal democracy, abominating the nobles and their privilege. He longed to trim their claws and teeth, though afraid the commons might push too far and too quickly. He knew the state of the country, foreseeing anarchy, aware that reactionary forces were leagued behind the King and would promote violence and the suppression of the States General, the restoration of autocracy. Now, however, Mirabeau showed no hesitation. Bailly, very

pale, in answer to injunction, said that the commons were about to deliberate. Deputies were hushed, and comfortless. Mirabeau thrust his way to the front, roused in the fashion of Mirabeaus at insult and crisis. In effect he told the Grand Master of Ceremonies to inform his master that the Third Estate were there by the will of the people and would leave their places only when driven by force of bayonets. The Marquis de Brézé, in his consternation, made an appeal to the President. Bailly seconded Mirabeau. The Marquis bowed, and withdrew. He hastened to the King. Louis had been told lately of insubordination among the troops, and probably asked himself if he could indeed drive anyone by force of bayonets. Refuse to go, did they! "*Eh ! f——, qu'ils restent !*" he said: let them stay!

Sieyès, in the Assembly, said deputies were to-day as they were yesterday: let them deliberate. Mirabeau wondered if *lettres de cachet* would be issued against the leaders of revolt, a real danger, and proposed that members of the Assembly be inviolable, that any attack on them be a capital offence. He had risen high in prestige since morning, admired for his brave energy, yet mistrusted; and he carried his motion. The Assembly continued its sittings, unmolested, and strengthened by many of the clergy; and forty-seven nobles led by the shady and watchful Duc d'Orléans, followed the clergy.

These incidents raised an uproar in Paris. Necker had resigned in humiliation, refusing to attend with the King at the Royal Session; and the crowds at Versailles, in communication with Paris, swarmed around Necker's house and called on him to resume office, menacing the Court. Louis submitted to necessity in his fear, urged Necker to withhold his resignation for the time being, and succeeded, though he could not forgive the man and would soon dismiss him. The Crown had been unable to enforce its will.

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The Archbishop of Paris was mobbed, and had to join the majority of his Order eventually, not ready to imperil his life, he too driven by necessity, intending to return to vigorous opposition at a more favourable moment. Louis hated bloodshed, riot, disaffection, and yearned to be gentle and wise. He besought rigid nobles to surrender and take their place in the National Assembly, overcame opposition, they too having agreed to await an opportunity more favourable for themselves. Accordingly, by July 2, the verification of all powers was concluded, and now the Assembly sat united in the business of counting heads, nursing rage otherwise, having its regulations and procedure, six chief secretaries, a President elected each fortnight, its proud right of free speech; and its spectators noisily expressing pleasure or displeasure and, at the moment, no order among its members, so that occasionally, as Young wrote, a hundred speakers would be on their feet simultaneously, demanding the word, heedless to rulings.

Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, gave his weight to the popular side, after flirting with reaction week by week, and moved that all imperative mandates from electoral areas should be cancelled. Hence the National Assembly invested itself with sovereign power, representing the nation, announcing itself as the nation, ready to begin on self-appointed labours to establish a Constitution and restore order in France.

## VII

The first *Comité de Constitution* was appointed on July 6. In the following weeks and months, anarchy spread over France and blazed in Paris, the seat of the National Assembly after the march of the people to Versailles and the forced removal of King and Court. Mirabeau, and perhaps only Mirabeau, realised

acutely the full significance of events and foretold the agonising course of the Revolution, if he could not have his way, strengthen King and executive, and save the freedom already won against tyranny and abuse. He knew the value of the old institutions that conserved specific ends, and he would not destroy ruthlessly, or displace such safeguards until new and reliable institutions could be established. The traditional monarchy, in his opinion, reduced in power, could be used to serve national unity against oligarchies and faction. In his lucid sense of past and future he could envisage a Republic, and dreaded it, always a royalist, wanting a King and a people leagued to deal with privilege, nobles, clergy. Monarchy must stabilise the Constitution and correct its faults, and then the people could enjoy the fruits of the Revolution; and, if necessary, like a good aristocrat he would dupe the people for their own happiness. He had the mind and at times the will of a great statesman; but the record of his own tumid past clung to him. The immorality of his youth, he confessed, damaged him as a public servant, and he had to make cruel expiation. He determined that the King should lead the Revolution, with himself, Mirabeau, as first minister: an enlightened Richelieu, as it were, advising and directing an enlightened monarch. The rest of his numbered days was the tale of effort to gain his prescribed end, of his failure to prove to the world his own unalterable conviction that he too, as he had heard of Pitt, might be a heaven-born minister.

When conferences were being held on the verification of powers, he turned to the executive, fancying he could solve all problems, making overtures. One or two ministers would have none of him; Necker agreed to see him, casually, having no serious regard for him. Mirabeau appeared, fervid with plans, expecting in his self-assurance to be welcomed as a political master and saviour. Necker glanced at him



coldly, and asked what he wanted. Mirabeau said he had come to wish him Good-morning, angry on a sudden. He left the minister, and slammed the door behind him. Necker was a fool, he told Malouet, referring to the incident, and would soon have news of him, Mirabeau. He looked to the Duc d'Orléans for his realisation of a royal democrat, and was cured of that illusion, since the Duke inspired neither liking nor confidence in him: a man not fit to be his valet, he said.

Mirabeau soon became the unmatched orator of the Assembly, his voice sonorous and masculine, compelling attention by the physical and mental power in him, often silencing opposition and contempt, temporarily. He scolded, pleaded, argued, dignified and grave, prompt to seize the fact, to shatter chimeras, to disentangle the concrete from webs of abstraction, armed with figures given to him by his overdriven secretaries, wily in affairs, stuffed with knowledge political, economic, experienced in crowds and men, though there may have been no uncompromising moral conviction in him at any time. The most prodigious individual force in the world, the like of which had not been known in France to any living man, folk said, and with only slight hyperbole. If he had developed a moral ardour equal to his genius, he might have been irresistible; yet, though his past followed him like his shadow, there was seldom much sorrow unfeigned, no humiliation meek in Mirabeau, and his imperious audacity over-reached itself once more, crippling him permanently.

He continued to search for support, now appealing in his vivid rhetoric to the conservatives, now to the liberals, now to the populace, rousing the crowds who thronged debates as he had roused the people at Aix and Marseilles, having helped to precipitate the Revolution, anxious now to control it. He said they were not savages arriving from the banks of the Orinoco

to form a society. They had a government already made, a King, established prejudices; and their task must be to reconcile all these factors as nearly as possible to the Revolution, and to avoid all violent transitions. He wanted civil liberty for France, and political freedom, safety against the attempted omnipotence of the Court, and from the extreme demands of popular demagogues, always faithful to his central idea of a constitutional monarchy, with himself as chief minister; and if his ideas could have been established by some directing hand other than his, probably he would not have seconded that hand loyally, though he declared his readiness to share authority, eager to scheme with men like Talleyrand, La Fayette, and others.

He thought that unless the King joined wholeheartedly in the great progressive march of those days, the King must perish; and he sneered at the crass inanity of the executive. Monarchy, he wrote, stood in peril not because there were conspiracies, but rather because there was no reasonable governing. Let the King consolidate the present gains of the Revolution and he would consolidate the monarchy, save himself and France; and if the National Assembly became unmanageable, then Louis must appeal to the people. Such was the fundamental theory; and in pursuit of it he would advocate civil war in preference to desisting, ready to lead against the Assembly a national party represented by the King, ignoring the possibility that a monarch so established, and triumphant, might play autocrat like a Louis XIV, when he had strength enough.

The National Assembly, like their successors, were jealous and mistrustful of the executive in relation to claimed legislative rights; in addition, they knew something of Mirabeau's goading ambition, and passed a law decreeing that no deputy might take office in executive government, thus finally excluding him from

the direct and authentic councils of the King: one of the most decisive acts of that Assembly, doing irreparable harm to constitutional monarchy; a narrow, grudging decision, hampering any form of government, and fatal to Mirabeau. Now he turned to the Court, since the Assembly had clipped his design, ripe in his disappointment to have that law annulled or the Assembly quashed. He began to negotiate with friends in the confidence of the King and Queen, siding again with the Assembly when his latest plans seemed un hopeful, and with the Court otherwise; and he argued the necessity of the King's absolute veto, saying he knew nothing more terrible than the autocracy of six hundred people: he would prefer to live in Constantinople rather than in France, if Louis had no veto.

The reactionary La Marck, Mirabeau's evil genius, took his friend's written proposals to the Queen; and though she refused to see Mirabeau, the King under her influence expressed a willingness to consider a bargain. La Marck asked Mirabeau to name his terms of service. Louis agreed to pay all Mirabeau's debts, to give him £3000 a year during the life of the Assembly, and £40,000 when it came to an end, if Mirabeau had been faithful and industrious on behalf of royalty. Louis enjoined the utmost secrecy, forced to recognise the power of the man, having no substantial faith in his integrity: hence that £40,000. He would not see his new, surreptitious adviser; nor would he take advice. Mirabeau used intermediaries and began on the long series of voluminous notes to his royal master, eloquent, often inspired writings. He knew all and foresaw all, Madame de Staël said of him. He summarised events, urging this and that home and foreign policy, repeating his theory of a constitutional monarch, never violating his principles in the matter of hated privilege and the rights of the people to citizenship. Before the Revolution, he wrote, the King's authority had been incomplete, because it had no legal basis;

inadequate, because it rested on compulsion and not on opinion; uncertain, because it could be overthrown by a revolution always imminent. The King had to consult the interest of the nobles, to negotiate with the clergy, to bargain with the *Parlements*, to heap favours on the Court; and his taxations had been repugnant and he was blamed for the arbitrary rule of his ministers. These evils had ceased; for, in the course of a year, liberty had triumphed over more prejudices, crushed more enemies to the throne, secured more sacrifices for the national welfare, than would have been possible by royal authority alone in several centuries. So Mirabeau wrote to Louis; and in the forty-seventh note of about a hundred pages, written shortly before his death, he enumerated the latest difficulties and dangers, and once more offered his remedies. Outstanding obstacles were the King's weakness, the unpopularity of the Queen, the Paris mob, the National Guard, the lack of support in the Assembly. Louis must accept what might be good in the Constitution, and work for the revision of the rest, influencing the electorate; preventing the re-election of obstreperous deputies, tampering with the army, and so on: an elaborate, cunning and sometimes dishonestly adroit plan which, La Marck objected, would need a Cardinal de Retz to promote and achieve. Mirabeau had become a bondsman, though frequently disobedient, ignobly placed, at times working for the King and not for the Constitution in process of formation.

Directly after the compact with his paymaster, he began to earn his money by arguing at the Assembly in favour of Louis' right to make war. England had seized Nootka Sound, on the Pacific coast. Spain objected, and called on France to help her, by reason of a Bourbon Family Pact. Barnave and his friends, the Left of the Assembly, saw an intrigue on the part of counter-revolution in this business, an effort to draw France into foreign war to re-establish Louis'

supremacy. Debates lasted days and resulted finally in the declaration that France would renounce all wars of conquest and would never employ her forces against the liberty of any people. Mirabeau claimed the right of the King to direct all diplomacy, and he wrestled with hostile deputies and in sound of a threatening mob round and about the chamber. Recently, he said, the people had wanted to carry him in triumph through streets in which they shouted now of his Great Betrayal. He did not need such a lesson to know that the distance from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock was short. But the man who had fought for reason and for his country would not be easily vanquished. . . . Let them abandon to the fury of a deluded populace one who for twenty years had resisted oppression of every sort, and who was talking to Frenchmen of liberty, the Constitution, and struggle, when these vile slanderers were making a livelihood out of all the prejudices then prevalent. What did he care? Let them answer him if they could; and then slander him as much as they liked. . . . His audacity and rhetoric carried his motion. Later, however, in the voting on separate articles, the Left regained a majority, won their amendments, defeated him; and thenceforth the King might have the right to propose war or peace, after which the Assembly would decide; and a *Comité Diplomatique* was appointed to revise existing treaties and to harmonise them with the new Constitution.

Once more he turned his back on the Assembly, and besought Louis to revoke the law that kept him from the ministry, again suggesting the dissolution of the Assembly, in a fever to have his way. He recovered popularity, trouncing the aristocrats when the Assembly Right, the royalists, attacked the new revolutionary flag of France; in fact, he was as impassioned and genuinely affronted as the most thorough-paced apostle of revolution, captured the ephemeral regard of the

Left, annoyed the Court, in measure defying his master. He lived on Court pay like a nabob during those crowded months, having a town house, a country house, carriages, stables, entertaining lavishly with his mistresses, as impetuous in his amusements as in his political activities, yet perceptibly tiring, wasted with disease and the fire in him. Anarchy on the one hand and the perpetual unrest of counter-revolution on the other at length discouraged him, and he tottered under the weight of his burdens and duplicity, wearied by the uncertainties of the King, the frivolity and cynicism of the Court, the treachery of Princes and ministers, the conflicting moods of deputies, many of whom suspected his bargain with Louis and would hear him but refused to submit to him; yet he continued to lust at once for power and popularity, failing alike in one and the other.

At the opening of the Assembly he had founded a journal, *Les États généraux*, assaulting the ministry; and when authority reproved him, he changed the title to *Lettres à ses commettants*. He pursued his journalistic way, demanding the right to give legitimate accounts of the daily proceedings in the Assembly to his electors, persisting; and so he had his valiant part in establishing freedom of the Press in France. Journals appeared in Paris and the country, multiplied themselves, unchecked in expression of opinion, applauding friends, pillorying enemies; and they alternately whipped Mirabeau for his defections and idolised him for his revolutionary virtue. So he drew near the end of his volcanic days, admired and envied at the moment, elected in turn as President of the Assembly, and of the Jacobin Club, then battling against suspicion, never overwhelmed, never wholly free. Early in 1791 a purulent ophthalmia nearly blinded him, and he addressed the Assembly, suffering intense pain, his eyes bandaged, his voice quivering yet audible, forceful, his spirit untamed by difficulties and afflictions. Heart-sickness,

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mental agitations, civil disorders, and immense labour, he said, had worn him out and he was no longer invulnerable. He collapsed at the end of March, ravaged with colics, organic trouble having become fatal. He took to his bed; and soon after, in his forty-third year, he died like a good pagan, fearless, jocose, theatrical, hearing the crowds as they assembled under his window to await news of him, besieged by messengers from Court, Assembly, revolutionary Clubs. Mirabeau's illness seemed a national calamity to almost all sections of Paris, and of France. His funeral in April attracted a multitude, had royal honours, military parades and salutes, and the body went to Sainte-Geneviève, a Panthéon for the illustrious dead; and lay there until displaced by Marat's corpse, three years having passed, the memory of Mirabeau and his jobbery with Kings being now odious to the ascendent Sansculottes.

### VIII

Mirabeau's father, dead on the eve of the Revolution, had said that his son might fling dust in the eyes of silly women, but would never be even the fourth part of a man. Mirabeau had the stuff of four, of forty men in him; and much valour, few scruples, less of heroic virtue; and the moral flaw spread, cracked his credit, marred his gifts. Strange destiny, his, he confessed; always the motive power of a revolution, and to find himself ever between a dung-pit and a palace. Malouet said of him that his outstanding quality was courage, adding strength to his talents, directing their employment and developing their force; that whatever his moral reputation may have been, when circumstance brought him to the fore he grew in stature and redeemed his character; that he rose to the summit of courage and virtue. Malouet's generosity took the sting from judgment.

Mirabeau had been labelled impostor, suborner, perjurer: in fact, always the prey of some immediate and egoistic need, tormented by his own activity, violent in his physical and mental appetites, excessive in his demands, prodigal of his resources, and sometimes irresistible in cunning and cajolery. And France went into a national mourning for the possibilities rather than for the matured fruit of his genius. His unfaithfulness in private life and his venality in public life ruined his schemes and might have ruined France and flung her into the reaction he fought sturdily, as a rule. His understanding and political acumen were great, yet he failed to see that occasionally his designs were analogous to a putting of new wine into old bottles. France needed new bottles even as she needed and harvested new wine. He roused the populace when he wanted help, and could not stem an on-rush more or less attributable to him. He had endowed men of the Third Estate with much of his own spirit, yet the bourgeois pate had not entirely ceased to duck to the golden fool, though critical enough; and the so-called lower classes, having learned that titled and gilded authority could be defied and shorn, thought they would do their own defying and shearing at last, in revolt against the leaders who had overthrown privilege and bridled the Court.

Mirabeau, like others of the Third Estate, believed in equality before the law, the right of men to happiness, and in national sovereignty, by which they meant the sovereignty of themselves, democratic in idea, not so in strict fact; and he at least knew that equality and national sovereignty, the two essential principles of the Revolution, might lead to universal suffrage and a Republic in the logical outcome. He and the men of his temper wished to deliver themselves and the King from old tyrannies, and were usually staunch to their notions of constitutional monarchy. Louis had called them together, urging financial help from them;



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but they meant to have a Constitution before granting subsidies; one that should confirm the predominance of themselves, ensuring the safety of their own property before they exercised benevolence and secured the majority of the people, the unpropertied classes, from oppression. The National Assembly, in its beginnings, and at its end, was good sound middle-class.

The painful and degrading strife between the comfortably breeched and the Sansculottes, between the industrialists and the workers and workless, made much of the Revolution-tale of the next few years. Tyranny, when one man or class established law at the cruel expense of other men or classes, had been partly abolished; freedom and the protection of ordered minorities against successful majorities had not followed automatically. Mirabeau had paid zealous court to freedom; yet perhaps the idea of freedom was never an immutable law of his mind. His hope that the King would become the champion of the people, his faith in Louis, destroyed him; otherwise he was a realist, and with ambition as a central motive, quite convinced that the idea of the just man made perfect must be unattainable in this world. Yet the ideal of freedom, as distinct from equality, in politics, resembled the ideal of the just man in ethics: one and the other might be unattainable, but the aim for freedom brought out the best of a nation even as the striving to reach perfection brought out the best in a man. And so Mirabeau never learned to practise a vigorous self-discipline, never reached a genuine moral development; and he perished, afraid that the equality now secured might be soon imperilled, even lost, in the war of faction, the conflict between anarchy and counter-revolution.

France mourned for him, and ceased to think of him in the prodigious effort to unravel itself, to hold conquered gains, and to win a liberty and fraternity that should outlast enemies.



DESMOULINS



CHAPTER III  
CAMILLE DESMOULINS; AND THE FALL  
OF THE BASTILLE

I

ON the day of the States General procession from Notre Dame to St Louis, a briefless advocate shabbily dressed, short in figure, jostled with the crowd, his furtive dark eyes restless, his long curling hair unkempt, his face pale, weak, shifty, yet touched with genius. He had failed as a poet, also in law, and was envious, full of rancour, sure that he ought to enjoy high place among these deputies and not scuffle with a mob of onlookers. Doubtless he frowned when his old school-fellow, Robespierre, already stern and austere, passed with the Third Estate; and he shouted in his excitement and sharp enthusiasm when the renegade noble Mirabeau appeared, conspicuous among the rest.

This brooding, needy young fellow, who had known hours of feasting, and of famine, Camille Desmoulins, the "poor Camille" of history, born in March 1760, came from Guise, in Picardy, son to a sagacious and moderate liberal having a minor judicial appointment in the district, and busy editing a Dictionary of Law in his cheerful leisure. The family were narrowed by circumstance though not indigent, and the mother worked night and day, affectionate and meek, attending to the household, rearing her brood, puzzled and often troubled by her eldest lad Camille; for he was brilliant and wayward, occasionally sullen, easily angered, a little hysterical. A relative helped him to a scholarship, and he went to the college of Louis-le-Grand, attached to the Paris University; and here he stayed until young manhood, taking a law degree;

a centre of rebellious activity; and according to reports he spent large sums financing riots, inciting disorder. The more extreme of the Clubs held their meetings near to the Palais-Royal, and the gardens served as a forum, peopled by crowds, demagogues, male and female rogues and tricksters: a little town of luxury within a greater, and occupying the police closely, Mercier wrote; a very temple of pleasure where vice was so bright that the shadow of shame had been chased away; and always the cafés were full of men, and of gossip, scandal, sedition. All Paris, Desmoulins informed his father, was in combustion, the Palais-Royal as full as an egg; and folk wildly cheered the Duke, were silent at sight of Louis, and shouted their *Vive la Nation!* and clapped hands when Bailly appeared. Riot and pillage had spread in April; and now the municipal authority could not deal with the situation.

Louis regained confidence under the influence of the Court faction opposed to the Assembly, sent for his foreign regiments, and early in July there was a camp of many thousands under the Marshal de Broglie near to Versailles, and mercenary troops were massed at Paris: a military concentration promising virtual war. The Assembly protested; Louis, dissembling, banished Necker, and formed a new ministry with the inflexible Breteuil, the Queen's friend, as chief. These facts, when known at Paris, inflamed the city. The electors, the Electoral College of Paris, took possession of the Hôtel de Ville and formed a new though illegal municipality in close touch with the commons at Versailles, presently launching their vague project of a civic army, the National Guard of the future. Regiments were being moved here and there, restive French guards, imprisoned, had been set free by shouting mobs. Crowds in procession were attacked by or attacked dragoons.

Desmoulins frequented the Palais-Royal, winning

notice as a stump-orator. On the afternoon of July 12, he gave the news of Necker's dismissal to an excited mob. The King's government, he said, were preparing a Saint Bartholemew for patriots. Ideas swarmed in his mind, stifled him, he wrote later, rousing him to madness. And he roused the people, daring all and any armed authority. He flourished his pistols dramatically, calling his brothers to liberty. He would not be taken alive; he would die gloriously! France must not be enslaved! "To arms, to arms!" he repeated. His cry spread over Paris, and made history for Paris, France, Europe. He took a green ribbon, the colour of hope, Necker's colours, and attached it to his hat: the new cockade, instantly popular. He was embraced, and urged to lead the insurrection. But insurrection needed no leader. Many reasonable worthy citizens knew that government had fallen to rags and thought they must secure arms to defend their own goods. Others took advantage of the mesmeric cry to destroy what to them seemed a cruel and blind despotism. Others saw chance of booty. Many cried for arms because their fellows cried for arms. On the 13th, uproar had increased. Versailles hung suspended, frightened, sceptical or indifferent. Commanders in different parts of the city sent couriers for orders and could get no answer. The committee of electors, in permanent sitting at the Hôtel de Ville, upheld the call for arms and strove to control and direct it.

On the 14th, a crowd surged to the Hôtel des Invalides. They took forcible possession of arms and ammunition, and went on to the Bastille, symbol of all that was abominable in the despotic past. De Launey, the governor, courteous and biddable at this hour, received a deputation sent by the electors' committee. They asked him to withdraw his cannon from the embrasures and to refrain from hostile acts. A second deputation, this time unofficial, was less credulous. They reported to the Hôtel de Ville after

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seeing the governor and the guns. The electors sent further representatives, beseeching De Launey to give whatsoever arms he had to them, the Commune, as an aid to public defence. He refused. The crowd passed from the outer to the inner court. Whether firing had or had not started at this pinch was doubtful. Shots were brisk enough soon after. The drawbridges were axed, and fell. The attack passed on, now before the last entrance to the Bastille. About three o'clock a final deputation came from the Hôtel de Ville. De Launey, apparently, raised a white flag on the walls, after ordering his men to display themselves with arms reversed. But the Swiss below continued to make bloody havoc in the crowd. New cannon were being placed by the revolted French Guards. De Launey was forsaken by his superiors, uncertain of his men, trapped without provisions. He went to the magazine, meaning to blow the Bastille skyward rather than capitulate. His officers interfered. The garrison ceased fire. De Launey surrendered, under promise from French Guards that he should be allowed honours of war. The crowd had lost eighty-three dead, fifteen mortally wounded, sixty disabled. Many were now drunk with their own savagery. De Launey was slaughtered on his way under escort to the Hôtel de Ville. A fellow carrying the head on a pike led the procession. The Bastille was overrun and ransacked; levelled to the ground during the next few weeks.<sup>1</sup>

### III

Desmoulins, on that day, marched in an ecstasy of vanity and patriotism; and at night he had work with an armed patrol. They met a detachment of hussars, and when the insurrectionary leader gave his

<sup>1</sup> For history of the Bastille and account of its fall, see Introduction to *Memoirs of the Bastille* (Routledge 1927).

sharp "*Qui vive?*" the officer of the hussars answered: "*France! Nation française!*" and Desmoulins thrilled again; and yet again on the morrow, hearing himself named Apostle of Liberty, acclaimed as a hero, the promoter of victory with his enkindling summons to arms. The people had triumphed, and the new municipality or Commune took full responsibility and became master. During those days the Assembly had also sat in permanent session at Versailles, they too appropriating and blessing the fall of the Bastille. Louis, on the 15th, promised that the troops in camp should be dispersed forthwith. He was unable to resist, bewildered by events, forced to humble himself at the moment; and he recalled Necker and dismissed Breteuil and his reactionary colleagues; who, together with the Comte d'Artois, the King's younger brother, Princes and Dukes, the Marshal de Broglie and others, fled, the first of the envenomed *émigrés*, disgusted with Louis in his confusion and disablement, forsaking him without shame after having reduced him to this pass.

A deputation from the Assembly went to Paris and had a royal welcome. Bailly was elected Mayor, La Fayette to the command of the armed people; a National Guard that spread over France, so that soon there were multitudinous patriots dressed in a national uniform, sworn to protect the country and the people, devoted to the Revolution, the majority drawn from the middle-classes. The Archbishop of Paris had a *Te Deum* sung at Notre Dame, honouring the fall of the Bastille; and on the 18th, Louis, brave in defeat, also went to Paris, after making his will and saying his prayers; and he wore the popular cockade, delighting the crowds, and went back to his enraged Queen, having two masters now, the Assembly and the Commune. In the next weeks the Provinces were incited by the example of the capital and developed their own procedure, rising against the ancient régime. The peasants burned châteaux, destroying title-deeds, and



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here and there seigneurs; the electors formed Communes supported by the National Guard to restore order, driven by necessity, since old authority had failed; and revolutionary France took permanent shape in those Communes embodying the new spirit, democratic or liberal, most of them, pledged to stem brigandage and to resist the encroachments of royal and other autocrats. The British Ambassador told his government that they might now regard France as a free country. Necker formed a new ministry; and the Assembly, after exercising itself during Parisian and provincial tumults in abstract discussions on the possible shape of a Constitution, grew alarmed at what Taine called Spontaneous Anarchy, torn as they were between notions of equality and freedom, and fear of intolerance, fanaticism, mob law.

On August 4, two noblemen proposed that deputies should at once and without equivocation destroy the feudal system and all feudal rights, arguing that Frenchmen struggled to free themselves from a yoke that had crushed them for centuries; that though insurrection must be condemned, it could be understood, even excused in the name of a victimised people. The Assembly, in disquiet, and solicitude, competed among themselves to forfeit antiquated rights. Never had such an immense work been dispatched in so little time, one of them admitted later; and Mirabeau said the Assembly spent a month wrangling over syllables, and overturned the whole ancient order of the kingdom in a night. Equality of taxation for all, abolition of many feudal burdens, sanction to redeem the rest at so many years' purchase; and punishment alike for all offenders; all citizens entitled to public service; suppression of game laws, the freeing of serfs, end to the *gabelle*, tithes to be commuted: these and like reforms were decreed in the impetuous generosity of that memorable night, and old privilege ceased to exist in France.

There was some remorse the next day. Hurried legislation, the sudden abrogation of so many hitherto permanent, hoary laws, inevitably led to complications, insuperable difficulty; for though feudalism had perished, valid territorial claims remained, European conventions and treaties had been infringed; and the Princes of the German Empire, having possessive rights and securities in Alsace, refused to submit or to accept compensation, nursed and paraded their grievances, contributing one of the nominal reasons for the subsequent European war; nor did anarchy expire in France, though it waned perceptibly.

After the destruction of old law came the establishing of new; and now warm discussion arose over the order of the day. Should a Declaration of Rights, the new charter for France, precede or succeed a Constitution? should a Declaration of Duties take first place? A motion for a Declaration of the Rights of Man won the majority; a Declaration for all men and all time and all countries, something to serve as a model to the entire world, acknowledging the unity of mankind, affirming rights common to all men, and that the principle of all sovereignty lay essentially in the nation, and no one person or body of persons could exercise an authority emanating otherwise. The Declaration in its definitive form opened by invoking the Supreme Being, and dealt with the natural and philosophic basis of the new order. It allowed resistance to oppression, the right of insurrection, posited the natural and imprescriptible rights of equality, property, liberty, security, self-defence: all men were born and remained free and equal in their rights, were entitled to share in representation, alike admissible to office, taxed in the same proportion, and social distinctions could be founded only in a general utility. All powers were granted by the people, who must act only through agents controlled by the sovereignty of the nation; there must be religious toleration, freedom

of the Press, a real freedom for all law-abiding citizens. . . .

That document, corollary to the extinction of privilege, served to control the future government of France, and profoundly influenced European politics; and it was fraught with trouble, since the first Constitution did not strictly follow the statement that all men were born equal and entitled to equal rights; did not allow universal suffrage, and made the possession of property a distinction between citizens, securing the power of a Third Estate at the expense of other Estates. Indeed, the Declaration of Rights was an example of political and social idealism, utopian, crammed with promise, and impossible of a complete fulfilment when confronted with actualities; and it stood as a pretext for disorder and outrage among men who fancied they were free and thought more of their rights than of their duties in the effort to give reality to noble, and sometimes to ignoble, romance.

## IV

Desmoulins had been indirectly and as it were by accident responsible for not a little of the foregoing history, and he had his benison from the crowd and gathered laurels due to him, laurels not due to him, agile to profit by his dizzy high leap to fame. In the autumn, the hot-heads and fire-brands of the Palais-Royal wanted to dictate to the revolutionary Commune, they in turn to the Assembly. The Assembly with its *bureaux*, and committees for nearly every department of State, dictated to the executive, the executive to the King; who hesitated, swung to and fro, resenting dictation in his inability to dictate effectively. Desmoulins fraternised with ultra-revolutionaries, heedless of peril in adding fuel to revolt during those days. The bulk of men were yet monarchists of a sort: not

so Desmoulins, stored with his reading in the ancients, bandying words on the supposed villainy of Louis. He wrote that perhaps there were not ten republicans in July 1789; and he himself had already composed an ode likening the King to Trajan. Before the fall of the Bastille he had produced his pamphlet *La France libre*, unable to launch it then. Now, however, publishers took courage, and pamphlets began to strew the town like autumn leaves, many of them poisonous from the hands of extremists, grossly abusive from the royalists; in fact, the aristocrats first gave example of derision toward Louis, openly despising the King, avid to restore the old feudal system, naming him *Capet*; and they wrote obscenely against patriots and especially the women-folk of patriots.

Desmoulins found a printer and added to his notoriety though not to his scant funds. In his recklessness, and like the American Jefferson, he looked to the day when Kings, nobles and priests would be haled to the scaffold they had so long deluged with human blood; and in *La France libre* he attacked royalty with a contumacious fervour seldom absent from any of his writings; nor were there many original creative ideas in him. His strength lay in refashioning old material and assimilating the discordant notions of others; but the poverty of thought and the breakdown of logic appeared in a unique dress; the witty gibes, the crisp aphorisms, the jubilant mockery and occasional glitter of the style, redeemed the design and placed him among the greatest journalists of the time.

*La France libre* opened with grandiloquent praise of liberty and an incitement to rebellion and pillage. Never had so rich a prey been offered to the victors: mansions, châteaux, two-fifths of the nation's wealth would be the reward of valour! So it went on, rich in menace, and gaiety, rousing foul stuff in starving men, buoyant in its destructive purpose; and now and again humane, nobly inspired, true. He railed at

priests, ridiculing Catholicism, wanting a gay religion that should be indulgent to pleasures and to women; and, folly for folly, he preferred Hercules slaughtering the boar to Jesus drowning two thousand pigs. He reviewed the Kings of France one by one, from Philip to Louis XIV. Kings! Desmoulins held them in horror: how could one not hate them, tigers as they were!

His next work, *Discours de la Lanterne aux Parisiens*, was yet more erratic, carefree, sinister. He wrote speedily and with ease, flinging sparks into powder-tubs; and he relished the game, as subtly clever as any man alive, as rash as a young lad enraptured by his ability to make turmoil: a Paris *gamin*, Victor Hugo's *Gavroche* in the flesh, overgrown, untamed, irresponsible. The *lanterne* was the improvised gallows of the streets, and he wrote as the *procureur général* of that *lanterne*, suggesting a hanging of aristocrats to cleanse the land of pest and make liberty a fact. There was a voracious appetite for that sort of printed fare. Desmoulins made the extravagant most of his widespread fame, idolising flattery; then, capricious in his moods, he slid from a summit of delight to a depth of fanciful and morbid woe. His journalism had not ended his squalid poverty, and he had to write home for aid, wanting cash, shirts, furniture for his garret, familiar with deputies and prominent men, yet beggared, pleading for six *louis*, invariably six *louis*, in letter after letter to his father; to a serious, thoughtful man who had no pleasure in broadsides like the *Discours de la Lanterne*; who knew the agony of France and was impatient with the jejune promoters of disorder, with apostolic, mischevious fellows of whom the fantastical Camille appeared to be a chief. Yet Desmoulins, in his more solemn hours, yearned for a worthy career, a house, an establishment, something durable and substantial; and presently for a regular journal more profitable and authentic than fugitive pamphlets.

At length he unearthed a publisher, also a literary colleague, made an agreement with considerable advantage to himself, and began his *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, with its short sequel, *La Tribune des patriotes*; his justification, he wrote years after; a good pillow on which to rest his conscience: a work republished in eight stout volumes, a new number having appeared each week. All the books, he said in the prospectus, all plays, public bodies and citizens from the President of the Assembly to executioner Sanson, would come under review; and he fulfilled that pledge, exercising his own peculiar genius, plenteous in variety, fanatical, emotional, pitiful, grave, and cynical, preaching his devil's gospel together with his genuine and most righteous evangel of liberty, his religion of humanity; frequently abusive, seldom repentant, then lewdly grinning, always eclectic, never dull. The Press had become a power, used by this and that faction, cajoled by friends, raided by political enemies, threatened by publicists suffering from lampoons. Desmoulins was credulous, weak, impressionable, and fearless, perhaps from an unawareness of danger in his exuberance rather than always from natural valour and conviction, though not cowardly, not wilfully base; and as the months passed he endured those sharp moments of dejection, beginning to tire, nervously overwrought, subject to languor and gloom. There were hours when in spite of compliments from crowds who said he had the thews of a Hercules, he felt as unhappy and lonely as Philoctetes in the Isle of Lemnos.

He had his brief spell of happiness, superabundant in measure, intoxicating him, adoring his Lucile, she too bitten with enthusiasm and the benevolent follies and high virtues of the day, as romantic and devoted as he. M. Duplessis and his wife, always friendly to the young man, ceased to regard him as an ardent though unsuitable mate for their daughter, impressed by his renown, his worth to the Revolution and the

seeming promise of his future, his patience and fidelity; and at last they consented to the marriage. Lucile's *dot* consisted of furniture, plate, and investments. Of the many guests who attended the ceremony, five close friends of the bridegroom signed the register as witnesses; and within a year or so, four of the five were to perish by violent death; and Desmoulins and his adoring wife, they too perished. After the marriage, he lived in a relative opulence, seldom despondent or apprehensive in the first months of his intimacy with Lucile, untroubled at the waning popularity of his journal, soon acquainted with Danton; and from that time onward the story of Danton outshone the story of Desmoulins, who became merely the shadow of his chief, then the courageous mouthpiece.

With Danton and men of the Cordeliers Club, Desmoulins found himself under order of arrest, and he went into a rural and not unpleasant exile at Bourgl-la-Reine; returning again to Paris, exonerated, though too late to be eligible for election to the Legislative Assembly in October 1791. During a lapse in journalism he practised at the Bar, soon wearied of law, impelled by the literary virus in his blood to use his pen once again; and use it he did, after a false start, producing *Jean-Pierre Brissot démasqué*, preliminary to the *Histoire des Brissotins*; irrational attacks, helping to the downfall of the Girondins, blasting them. Consequently, when Brissot and his friends were condemned, in the virulence of revolution, Desmoulins, horrified, bitterly repentant now, cried out that he, he had killed them! A new seriousness aged him rapidly and he was clawed with remorse; for he had striven to drive those men only to obscurity, not to death, using his scatheful genius with no thought to the ultimate possibilities, concerned with the game of the hour, blind to the dangers, unable to forecast likely evils.

Twelve months after his marriage, the revenue

from his wife's property had lost much value, government stock being at a low ebb in the welter of faction against faction, nation against nation, and his prodigalities endangered his peace; but with Danton's rise to power, he too rose, and gained election to the National Convention. He had work, and apparent security and comfort, as a secretary when Danton became Minister of Justice. Desmoulins and his enchanted Lucile, with their infant son, moved house, installing themselves in official quarters, riotously and momentarily happy anew, extracting the utmost from prestige, and their State income, dazzled by their own success. He wrote to his father that the gall-bladders of the Guise folk, so stuffed with envy, would overflow at the news of his astonishing fortune; and he thought himself a very darling of fortune, heedless to the past, careless of the future while the present amused him and he could follow the whim of the moment and bask in popular favour, busy by day at his official duties, enjoying a round of suppers, theatre-parties, receptions of an evening, as if life were a fairy tale and he the Prince of jovial good fellows.

## V

He was friendly with Arthur Dillon, a soldier of Irish stock who had spent years in the French army, had fought in America; who became a general in 1792, serving the Revolution under Dumouriez. Dillon stood at the bar of the Convention on a charge of royalism; and he saved himself, for the moment, but did not regain a command; nor did his foes cease to name him Aristocrat. Desmoulins spoke and wrote for him; and in his assurance and confidence he misjudged his own security with fellow-revolutionists and began to censure the *Comité de Salut public*, again in support of Dillon. He made enemies among the



Jacobins, vexed the Left of the Convention, he himself accused of aristocratic tendency and design, and with no tittle of genuine evidence. The Committee retorted by demanding the arrest of Dillon, and duly imprisoned him. Desmoulins took occasion to repeat his attacks on men of the Committee at the Convention, ready in his thoughtless zeal to impute the disasters of the Republican armies to the clownery and rancour of these men. He spoke impetuously, and persisted when called to order by the President. Then he wrote his *Lettre à Dillon*, tilting at authority, deriding leaders. Dillon had his liberty; but from that day Desmoulins was marked for destruction, though blissfully ignorant, infatuated with himself and his satirical genius.

About the end of 1793 and during the early months of 1794, at the height of the Revolution, with war abroad and contention at home, Desmoulins held close to the heels of Danton, inspired by him, grown now to a full and responsible manhood. In his newly awakened dismay at bloodshed and political atrocity he published six numbers and wrote the seventh of his *Le Vieux Cordelier*. Robespierre at the outset professed to approve of Desmoulins' original plan to make war on what he called the *enragés*, read the early proofs and had influence on the writing. The third number belonged wholly to Desmoulins in fact, to Desmoulins and Danton in spirit, and earned him a notable place in world history: a great and a brave pamphlet, alike in matter and style and its glowing humanity. Desmoulins used the frail disguise of a translation from Tacitus. He smote all tyranny, lashed all oppression and cruelty, pouring ridicule and scorn on the methods of one-time friends and new enemies for discovering and murdering suspects. If a citizen were popular—Suspect! If he remained quietly at home—Suspect! If he were rich—or poor—Suspect! Sombre, melan choly—Suspect! An optimist—Suspect! If virtuous and austere—Suspect! If a philosopher or a poet—

Suspect! And Desmoulins raged at Informers who, incited by authority and always at their noisome work, were overcrowding the prisons. Alarm spread among men in office. Desmoulins' peril was great.

Parisians were impressed by this eloquent, solitary voice raised in a wilderness. Desmoulins, revived and fortified, took yet more daring ways. In the fourth number he said he differed wholly from those who urged the need of a Terror. On the contrary, liberty would be consolidated only by a Committee of Mercy. Mercy! a word utterly forgotten! Liberty meant happiness, justice, reason! Let them open the prisons and release the two hundred thousand suspects. Let them return to the principles formulated in the Declaration of Rights. . . . Many thousands of this number were sold, and read by men and women uplifted and enraptured, hearing this plea for Mercy, quivering in response to the former *procureur de la lanterne*; a disillusioned man at this hour; hitherto drunk with his own domestic joy and political vanities and the imagined splendour of the immediate day; now facing enmity, clogged with dark forebodings, seeing evil abroad in France and the prelude of the Revolution disfigured and debased; envying his brother, who had died recently like a simple good patriot at the front.

In the fifth and sixth numbers he faltered, made concessions in part to the men he had affronted, denying himself and his humanity, having been accused at the Jacobin Club. Robespierre damned him with tepid, equivocal praise, and then forsook him. He had admired and followed Robespierre: he loved Danton. He was suddenly and acutely in fear of his life; but he braced himself once more and wrote the seventh number, crying shame on the Convention and its enslavement to the Committees. His publisher, aware of much danger, refused to print, had his premises searched nevertheless, and was arrested; Desmoulins

likewise, together with Danton and others; betrayed and shunned by many of his acquaintance, denounced by the tribunes and the Clubs. He said he had started the Revolution, and his death was about to end it. He remained close-shut at the Luxembourg until the trial a few days later, early in April, trying to comfort himself with Young's *Night Thoughts* and Harvey's sepulchral *Meditations*, more often distraught, weeping, swung between dread, and a hope that Danton's genius would save him. He could look into the Luxembourg Gardens from the window of his impromptu cell, and see Lucile, make signs to her; and to Madame Duplessis when she too wandered sorrowing round and about the prison. He wrote poignant letters to Lucile, naming his love for her, his joy in her, nourished and enriched at thought of her, reviewing the past, quiet, courageous; then breaking out, calling on her from his tomb, as he said, afraid for her and their young lad.

Dillon also was imprisoned at the Luxembourg, though able to move here and there and to communicate with Lucile. And later the pair were charged with seeking to provoke a revolt against Jacobins on behalf of Danton, Desmoulins and their friends: an ascribed plot fatal to Lucile and Dillon.

The trial of Desmoulins with the Dantonists on a charge of conspiring against the nation, of wanting to re-establish the monarchy and to destroy republican government, lasted four days. Danton filled the stage, dwarfed the rest, outspeaking the court and his fellows, outroaring them. Desmoulins relied on Danton's fortitude and energy and kept silent most of the time, save for an occasional outburst; and now and again a characteristic remark, his old flair for the cynical phrase manifest in spite of his agony. When asked his age, he answered, adding a year to the total, that his age was that of the good Sansculotte Jesus; an age disastrous to revolutionaries. On the last day he tore a memoir, or the charge-sheet, and flung the pieces

at the jury. When the trial ended abruptly, he clung to a bench, howling. Three attendants dragged him to his cell.

In the afternoon, officials came to prepare him for the guillotine. He crouched in a corner, fought like an animal. He struggled again in the tumbril, on the way to death, surrounded by cavalry, infantry, cannoneers, National Guards. He tried to break his cords, tore his clothes, bared his neck and chest. He begged the crowd to help him. Their friends were being killed! He was Camille Desmoulins! He had called patriots to arms in '89! He was Camille Desmoulins, Camille Desmoulins! The people were deceived! Could they not recognise him! Would they not save him! His guard threatened to tie him to the floor of the tumbril. He ceased to rave, and stared to right and left, unable to believe that instant death awaited him, Camille Desmoulins. He saw the guillotine, reddened by the sunset, gaunt in the centre of a multitude at the Place de la Révolution. He struggled anew, resisting the executioner, all the manhood out of him. When about to submit to the knife, red now with the blood of his friends, he recovered his verve. He said that here was a worthy reward for the first Apostle of Liberty! And so he died, master of himself at that last moment; and with a curl of his wife's hair tight in his fist.

Dillon and Lucille took the way of the tumbrils some days later. On the scaffold she held herself bravely, now weary of her days, inconsolable.

## VI

Desmoulins typified certain men, not essentially vicious, produced by revolutions and often harmful to Revolution, discredited by their unthinking licence and careless rhetoric; vain, egoistic, and therefore

envious, never fit to govern, not having learned to serve humbly and cheerfully; madcaps relishing disorder for its own sake rather than order for the sake of a cause. Yet he dreamed of a Republic that a whole world might love. The more stable men of the Revolution were trained to reason, if not always to follow reason; and, though perhaps scorning Thomas Aquinas, they would have agreed wholeheartedly with his political theory that a King, unfaithful to duty, forfeited claims to obedience; that it could not be rebellion to depose him, for he himself had rebelled and must accordingly be suppressed; that no government had a right to levy taxes beyond a limit determined by the people, since all political authority must be derived from popular suffrage, all law made by the people or their representatives. There was sound and humane statesmanship in such theory; there was much gaiety and no statesmanship in Desmoulins and his like, no calm reflection on the past, no deliberate consideration of the future; withal, no hypocrisy in him, and that stood to his credit at a time when sly operations engaged many an able brain.

He reflected the temper of the people, like a clever journalist; nervous, excitable, subject to excess, saved from at least one vulgarity of his trade by the supreme gift of style; and too often he appealed to the animal and not to the rational man, encouraged by his rise to fame, lusting for renown; a brilliantly equipped young scapegrace in his early revolutionary days, versatile, unbalanced, finding life delicious, then insupportable, and this ten times in a day, as he wrote. He scoffed and railed, with no evil intent, indirectly promoting anarchy when earnest good men were wrestling manfully and always to stem the wild torrent and to establish government. So until he had learned the bitter lesson; and he went to his doom after an attempt to redeem his own folly and to take sides with high virtue, in agreement maybe with greater

men who insisted that government was the art of dealing wisely with huge groups of conflicting interests, that political truths were always relative, never absolute, true political principles those of morality enlarged; that life, as Taine said, was no longer a *salon* where one talks—or a Palais-Royal forum, or a desk at which one writes—but a laboratory where one thinks.

Camille Desmoulins was an emotionalist; and the emotionalists in public as in other life were always a danger to themselves and usually to their more temperate fellows. But he deserved imperishable wide praise for his *Vieux Cordelier*.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MARCH TO VERSAILLES

IN the autumn of 1789, the Paris Commune under Mayor Bailly, and the National Guard well armed under La Fayette's command, laboured at once to prevent violence and to check counter-revolution. After August 4, that pentecost night of renunciation, and the ensuing Declaration of Rights, the committees appointed to frame a Constitution and to report to the Assembly offered their findings and suggestions and debates began, sections of Constitution number One being decreed piecemeal. Meanwhile loud-tongued rumour insisted that the Queen, the Comte d'Artois and the Comte de Provence, Louis' brothers, and their royal and royalist friends, were again at insidious work, aiming forcibly to suppress the Assembly, abetted by a small minority of the Assembly itself. There were sharp divisions of opinion and temper among deputies, quickened by the principles of the Declaration already decreed, not yet sanctioned by the King; and the clergy were restive, attentive to their own peculiar rights. Mounier led the moderates, pleaded for a Second Chamber as a means to check hasty legislation, and argued in favour of absolute veto; and Mirabeau had his word. Louis was advised by his executive to postpone acceptance of the abolition of feudal laws; and though he did finally and by drive of circumstance submit to the decrees and the Declaration, the people of Paris thought and said he was against them. Mounier failed to carry the motion for a Second Chamber, opposed by the Left, by the extreme Right who wanted to wreck the Assembly and to restore the old order, and by the Right who feared

that a Second Chamber would be packed with renegade nobles. Compromise followed in the guise of a suspensive veto, the King thus having the right to check legislation only for a specified time. The people in their distrust and apprehension imagined that veto of any sort meant reaction, unaware that since the Assembly retained the voting of supplies, Louis would be yet held in leash; and suspicion increased and folk were angry when Mounier, accused of reaction, was elected President of the Assembly.

In September, monarchists were alarmed by riots in Paris and threats of a raid on Versailles, and they urged Louis to transfer government to Soissons, or elsewhere, as protection against the immediate designs of Palais-Royal rebels. Louis refused, anxious and depressed, not quite chapfallen; yet he agreed that cavalry and infantry, including the Flanders regiment known to be staunch and loyal, should come to Versailles. This fact roused protests in the Assembly and new agitations at Paris. Food stocks were low in the city, flour was scarce owing to a disordered transport, the greed of monopolists, the strategy of anarchists. Women fought for bread at the bakeries; crowds of hungry men, workless in the general breakdown, walked the streets and besieged the offices of the Commune. On October 3, passions rose high at news of a banquet given at Versailles on the evening of the 1st by the Royal Guard to the officers of the Flanders regiment; a banquet patronised by the King and Queen, when the guests, after singing *Oh Richard oh my King the whole world forsakes thee*, tore national cockades from uniforms and trampled them in derision and a vinous loyalty; would not drink to the health of the nation, did drink confusion to patriots, the revolutionaries.

On October 4, Paris seemed in the mood for another uprising. Folk said that the nation had been insulted; the King was about to retire to Metz;



troops would charge the people, begin civil war in the name of absolute monarchy. The cry of July 12 had been "To arms!" Now the cry was "To Versailles!" Insolent Royal Guards and Flanders officers must be punished at once; the Assembly must be purged of reactionary deputies; the King must be brought to Paris, kept in Paris, his rightful place, under care of the National Guard.

The actual march to Versailles on the 5th had origin in the demand for bread. Famished women, who were told that large sums had been paid to the bakers to create discontent by withholding food supplies, invaded the Hôtel de Ville, threatening destruction; and they rang the tocsin, attracting battalions of guardsmen. Torches were kindled to burn the building and official papers; so much supposed municipal scribble useless to empty bellies. Patriot Maillard, son of a merchant and admired for his bold share in the assault on the Bastille, put himself at the head of this determined if not reasonable mob of hungering women. He spoke in sympathy to them, explaining after parleys with authority that the women must go to Versailles and petition the Assembly, the King, since officials were powerless. And away they went, marching in order, assured among themselves that the troops at Versailles would not slaughter poor creatures who wanted food, were heartsick of patriotic talk, and meant to be fed.

Maillard led the way, beating a drum; and before the procession left the outskirts of the city it was joined by less reputable sisters from the markets, and by desperate fellows tricked out with female clothes. Warnings were sent from the Hôtel de Ville to the Assembly. Then the National Guard chose to go to Versailles. They would give a lesson to the offensive banqueters of October 1, stir the Assembly from its lethargy, pluck Louis from the hands of men and a woman vigorously hostile to the Revolution. La Fayette

## THE MARCH TO VERSAILLES

made no attempt to interfere with the march of the women, knowing there were forces enough at Versailles to protect the King from outrage; but he opposed this second, armed march, saying the Assembly did not need support, trying to placate his men. So for hours. He was threatened with hanging if he refused to keep his command and to march; and he set out in the afternoon, authorised by the Commune, he too sending a message in front of him. Thus the National Guard began its seven hours' trudge, not singing, not joyous, afoot to maintain *their* Revolution, to bleed and die for it, if they must.

Maillard and the women reached Versailles about an hour before the National Guard left Paris. The hoydens of that miscellaneous pack had become ferocious and spoke of dismembering the Queen and carrying the bits in their aprons to Paris. There had been much disquiet in the Assembly, many of the deputies having anticipated invasion from the city. A few days earlier, Necker had confessed that he could not raise further loans, calling for a large increase of direct taxation. Mirabeau had made his most famous speech, upholding Necker, giving an unforgettable, gruesome picture of imminent ruin; and he carried the motion, a redoubtable moderate on that occasion. Now, on the morning of the 5th, he took part in the discussion of the King's unreadiness to sanction the Declaration of Rights, reiterating his argument that such a Declaration ought to follow, not to precede, the Constitution; that the King's evasions were not perverse. He was ready, when challenged, to denounce the banquet of officers; the King, however, must be inviolable, though such inviolability applied only to the King. Thus he menaced the Queen indirectly, not so moderate on this occasion. The Assembly agreed, on his motion, that Mounier, the President, should at once make further representations to Louis and beg his acceptance of the decrees.

## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Maillard appeared with a squad of women. Mira-beau wanted to adjourn the sitting. Mounier refused. He said that men must be prepared to die at their posts. Maillard asked the Assembly for cheaper bread, spoke of food monopolists and of insults from the Royal Guard; and when rebuked by the President for using the word "citizens," he said that any deputy too proud to be a citizen ought to leave such an Assembly. They sent Mounier at the head of a deputation of women to present their complaints to the King. Louis surrendered to demand, and gave written orders for the Paris municipality concerning food-supplies. The deputation of women returned in triumph to the crowd outside; and presently, with Maillard, they set off for Paris in a royal carriage.

The women in front of the Palace spoke of bribes, abusing the deputation; and they began to mingle with the protective Flanders regiment drawn up on parade, and distributed money sent by factions from the Palais-Royal, cajoling the King's troops on behalf of insurrection. Others swarmed into the Assembly hall and shouted for the President, eager to kiss him. Mounier, vexed and humiliated by his inability to keep order, had not come back from the Palace. As the night advanced, the Assembly became a jovial romp, picnic ground for women supplied with bread and wine, camping until dawn, they hoped. A few deputies were amused and complacent; others were affronted, and much troubled for their own safety and that of the Court. The deputy-president adjourned the sitting. Mounier had heard that the Paris National Guards were marching. He hastened to the Assembly. Louis, in despair, had at last given the royal sanction to the decrees and the Declaration. Mounier cancelled the adjournment and wished to deliberate on emergency measures, more anxious about the news from Paris than about sanctions at that moment. La Fayette arrived soon after, near to midnight, with his men.

He assured Mounier that the National Guard could be withheld from violence, and did not mention their design to take possession of the King in the name of the new France. He went to the Palace, leaving his troops massed outside.

In the gathering uproar, the Palace, besieged from without, had its own difficulties and panic within. Ministers and the Queen solicited the King to issue orders. He thought of prompt flight to Rouen, and of other expedients, always uncertain and therefore hapless during crisis. He gave no order, except that his troops must not fire on women. "Gently, gently!" he kept saying in his impotence and hebetude. The Flanders regiment and the Royal Guard, nominally protecting the Palace, were left without real leadership, many of them without cartridges. They hobnobbed with the women, and with the National Guard, promising to abstain from war on patriots. They said they too were good patriots. At length they were told to leave the outer defence to the National Guard from Paris; inside the Palace the Royal Guard would take duty. La Fayette, after chill reception from Louis, had reassured his master with loyal vows. He heard that sanctions had been given; the ministry would arrange with the Commune for provisioning Paris, the King would trust for safety to the National Guard, though Louis did not then promise to go with his Court to the city, assenting only hours later. La Fayette reported to the Assembly, assuming that all was henceforth safe from bloodshed; and he went to the lodging of a friend, to rest, exhausted after his day, and calm.

The guarding of the Palace was shared between two bodies of troops under separate commands, thus imperfect. One door had been left without sentries; negligently, not maliciously. Through that door, about six o'clock of the morning, a group of fellows made their way to the royal apartments. There was no

certainty as to the full intent of these men and the master or masters for whom they acted. Probably they meant to kill the Queen. Before and after October, similar small groups were at work, pitiful human scum, defiling the Revolution even in its early and best days. They may or may not have been paid by the Duc d'Orléans, by aristocratic enemies of the Austrian Marie-Antoinette, by agents of foreign powers. Two of the Royal Guard, awake, vigilant while others slept, fired on these men. They were dragged from the Palace, and killed. The Royal Guard retreated to the interior, though a brave soldier stood to his duty at the door of the Queen's room. A lady-in-waiting opened that door, saw the sentry daubed in his own blood and fighting manfully. He bade her warn the Queen; fell, clubbed with a musket. Marie-Antoinette fled in her bedgown to the King's rooms. They heard a howl of voices, approaching. La Fayette's men ran to the scene and prevented a butchery.

When he came, summoned from sleep, the rival Guards had made peace. He saw that his men were defending the King and Queen from a mob at the Palace doors, who said the King must come to Paris forthwith. Louis was helpless, at the mercy of the National Guard. La Fayette at last induced him to agree to an immediate removal to the Tuileries; to show himself on a balcony, the Queen also, at the side of La Fayette; who bowed to her and kissed her hand. The crowds shouted: "The King to Paris, the King to Paris!" Louis repeated his promise. Instantly the crowd began to cheer him, cheered Marie Antoinette; a new experience for her in her deep misery. Carriages prepared a few hours ago for the suggested flight to Rouen took the King, the Queen and the Dauphin to Paris, escorted by the National Guard, many deputies, and crowds shouting, laughing, singing, and hooting. They said they were fetching the Baker, the Baker's wife and the Baker's boy; and

the heads of the murdered Royal Guards were carried on pikes, like banners, and thrust in sight of the carriage as popular trophies.

They reached the capital a little before eight o'clock in the evening. Mayor Bailly addressed the King; and presently, when the royal pair arrived at the Tuileries and had supper, Louis, smiling, always courageous on these occasions, astonished his servants by making a hearty meal; and no doubt he slept well. President Mounier had adjourned the Assembly; and when they met again they agreed that they were inseparable from the King; and they too went to Paris finally. Mounier resigned, tried to excite a revolt in Dauphiné; and, failing, he left France, as did many of his friends, and others: the second large batch of *émigrés*, several of whom had forwarded revolution, and were offended and now sought their own safety.

Louis was not yet an actual prisoner, but he had lost his freedom; and the Assembly too had lost much freedom. They had possession of the Tuileries *Salle de Manège*, the riding-school; much room here, many deputies having fled; and the galleries accommodated spectators usually noisy, sometimes transforming deliberations into a chaotic public-meeting, intimidating nervous deputies.

Division in the Assembly was more clearly defined: Right, Centre, Left. Groups of the Right were unruly, jeering at legislation, indifferent to government since they could not govern in their own way; the Left were aggressive, now and again taking dictation from the Commune and from revolutionary Clubs; and men like Malouet went to the debates armed with pistols. Each day there were sittings, morning and night, and the Assembly and its numerous Committees pursued their great work, encroaching on and overriding the executive, having abolished the old *Parlements*, dealing with all forms of legislation; and they

laid the foundations of modern France, indefatigable as pioneers, gaining experience and skill in face of troubles and faction, continuing their way, often at peril to themselves from conspiracy within and without. Marie-Antoinette despaired of strong, of any direct action on the part of her royal spouse, and began clandestine efforts at home with Mirabeau, with men devoid of Mirabeau's genius and less eager to establish constitutional government; and abroad with enemies of the Revolution; for the scare of October had wrought change in her and she showed herself resolute in Court circles, though seldom wise, unable to think or to feel as a Frenchwoman. Louis was harassed by her and her acquaintance and their projects, impelled by his own vague notions of a temperate reform. To gain respite he offered to take a lead from progressive men. About the same time he sent the Abbé de Fonbrune as a secret agent to His Catholic Majesty at Madrid, Louis' cousin. The Abbé gave the Spanish King a written declaration to the effect that whatsoever Louis might do or sign under persuasion of revolutionaries must be regarded by European Kings as worthless, void, deceptive.

An inquiry into the events of October and the invasion of Versailles exposed no irrefutable proof of the Duc d'Orléans' complicity or treachery; but strong doubts remained, and he had to leave the country, on the fictitious pretext of a diplomatic mission to England. Directly after, a plot involving Monsieur, the Comte de Provence, and Mirabeau, led the Marquis de Favras to recruit royalist volunteers to act as cover for Louis in an attempt to escape from Paris and the new powers; an abortive plot. The Marquis was arrested. Monsieur read a speech written by Mirabeau to the Commune, disowning Favras, saved himself and sacrificed his friend; who went to his death, making no effort to expose his masters, loyal to them. These facts, so far as they were known, served to rouse the Commune,

## THE MARCH TO VERSAILLES

further to discredit the aristocrats, and indirectly the King. Louis went to the Assembly in February, 1790, to quell suspicion, and read a speech composed by Necker, prompted by La Fayette, announcing that he and his Queen submitted wholly to the new France, to constitutional government, and without any reservations; and he called on all good Frenchmen to make a like submission. Deputies in their enthusiasm and delight, and their loyalty to a conciliatory King, took an oath of fidelity to the Nation, the Law, the King. Ministers and bishops and State officials also swore, tranquilising Paris for the moment, exasperating the *émigrés*, and especially the Comte d'Artois, to hatred of their King, to the promotion of insurrection within France, and schemes for intervention from abroad against the people of France.



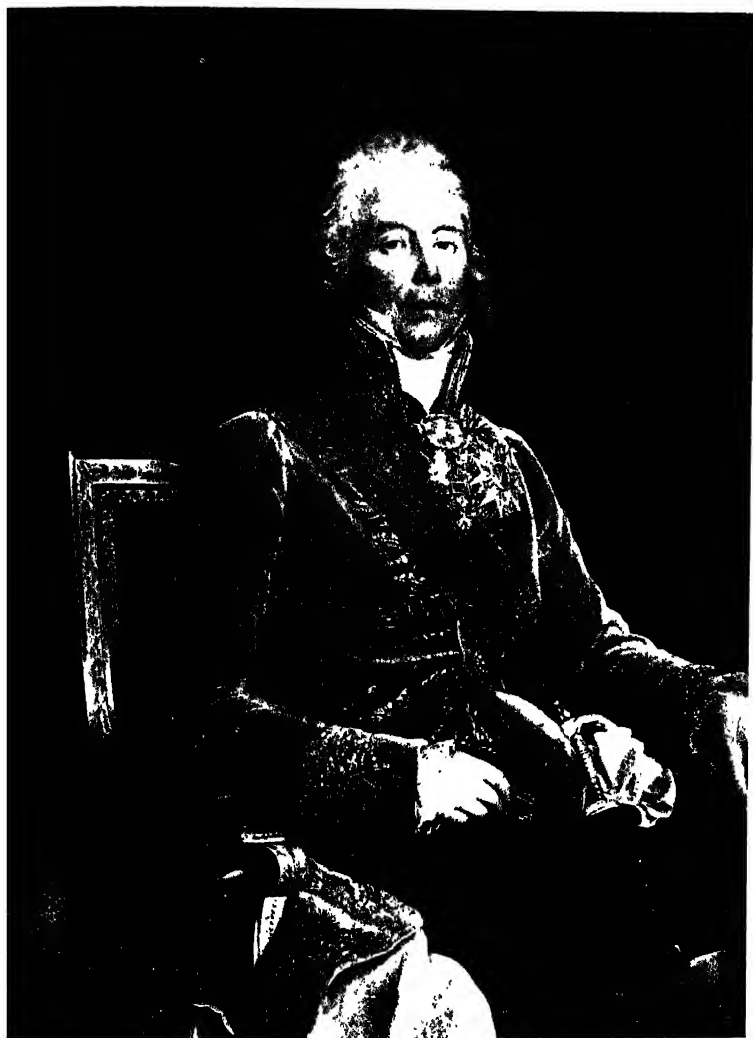
## CHAPTER V

### TALLEYRAND ; AND THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION OF THE CLERGY

#### I

IN the autumn of 1789, a high-clergy deputy, the Bishop of Autun, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Prince de Talleyrand as he would figure in nineteenth-century history, began to emerge from the shades in which he had chosen to linger and to watch political events; a little fellow pallid and thin, aristocratic and priestly when in view of crowds, hiding his thought from the inquisitive, using speech as a shield to obscure his intention, master of himself, prudent to artfulness, and already, he too, resolved to be a master of men and events. To have no principles, that was the best of principles! He was lame from infancy, rarely straight in his observed and public march at any time, devious by instinct and training, most supple of men, reticent and discreet; and born to be the arch-politician of the Republic, the Empire, the successive monarchies, dealing with Kings and European statesmen as if they were so many chessmen and he the supreme exponent of the game, unmatched, and unrepentant. Mirabeau was the giant of the National Assembly, Talleyrand reached eminence much later; Desmoulins had been governed by his emotions, Talleyrand followed his own occult logic; and the trio squared only in their egoism: a realist, a romantic, and a sceptic. Mirabeau frowned in his angers; Desmoulins drove himself crazily; Talleyrand coined and practised his famous maxim: *Pas de zèle!*

Four days after Louis' forced journey from Versailles to Paris, this prelatical deputy took his first momentous



TALLEYRAND  
after Gerard (Versailles)



step and proposed a measure destined to enforce political and religious crisis, altering the character of the Revolution, precipitating strife at home and abroad. Men who took momentous steps in those days perished within a year or two, several of them; but Talleyrand survived, living through various régimes before his doomsday sounded; and that was the measure of this elegant churchman, this affable aristocrat, a product of eighteenth-century France, true to his stock. A Périgord had braved the first of the Capets with his: "Who made you King?" a Cardinal Périgord, friend of Petrarch, famous alike at Avignon and Rome, had been named Pope-maker; and church dignitaries and soldiers swarmed in the genealogical table. Charles-Maurice fell from a chest of drawers in his third or fourth year, neglected by his nurse, and he was slightly and permanently crippled; thus he could not be a soldier, and when Talleyrands were not soldiers they were priests, dedicated to God. French society had not yet accepted dictation from Rousseau, and Talleyrand's autocratic parents saw him but seldom, directing his growth from afar. He wrote in the not always reliable *Mémoires*, his apologia, that never had he slept under the roof of his parents; which fact may have accounted for his politic disregard of the simple humanities and loyalties, for much of his cynicism in manhood, and a studious worship of self-interest, affection in him being illgrown, warped, though there were more than enough of erotic follies and other intrigues in his story.

When eight years old, 1762, he was sent to college at Paris, and had the especial privilege of dining once a week with his parents, led by a preceptor, taking his food gravely, in silence, already schooled to the stiff family etiquette of the period, leaving again for his college after the usual: "Be wise, my son, and content Monsieur the Abbé;" about the only words he did hear from his frosty sire. Five years later he went

to Saint-Sulpice, now properly embarked for the Church; a frail, rueful lad, intelligent enough to resent his ecclesiastical fate, unable to resist, having no intimate friends, no tender mentors, already hating the Church and the obnoxious priests he had seen; no juvenile religious impulse in him, no sense of reverence, no hope for his future as it appeared to extend in front of him, monotonous and drab. Talleyrand's early life might have been designed to fashion a saint or a satirist. There was no trace of sanctity in the man, the Prince, nothing of the visionary, though some spirit in the youth, if truth made the tale of his first encounter with Mirabeau; who, at an early hour, returning from a debauch in the city, allowed a young seminarist to use the roof of his carriage, to climb the wall of Saint-Sulpice and escape censure for nocturnal truancy, and in so doing rendered a service to his subsequent acquaintance, sometimes friend, and opponent, Talleyrand.

A visit to the youth's paternal uncle, the Archbishop of Rheims, devised perchance to whet the appetite of a budding and morose priest, had already made Talleyrand familiar with the carnal prodigalities of high churchmen, and no doubt contributed to his scepticism, likewise to his eventual hunger for riches. Thereafter, in the chapel of Saint-Sulpice, he noticed an unintelligent, kindly actress, drawn to her, starving in his impulse and affections, burning for sympathy, and other things. The young lady took pity on him, and had recompense; for in gallantry he was to become almost as notorious as in diplomacy, though his whorages were unlike Mirabeau's, his *pas de zèle* perhaps saving him from flaming scandals; nevertheless there were scandals. He may have known stings of conscience as the time drew near for his taking irrevocable priestly vows. On the evening of that solemn event, certainly he suffered, tearful, in doubt of himself, loathing the holy vocation about to seize

him and to hold him in perpetuity; but he could not resist his circumstance, his parents, his sacerdotal preceptors, nor withstand the future built for him in defiance of his character and temperament. He was a Talleyrand; he had a club-foot; consequently and inevitably he must become a christian. He took the vows, recovered from dejection; and like the majority of his reverend brethren he spied for preferment, a rich fat living, material ease, Court patronage, aware that there were enviable rewards in the aristocratic world for ambitious and avaricious disciples of the lowly man who preached the Sermon on the Mount. And theological training, as he said in old age, gave force and flexibility to the mind, and fostered political excellence.

Talleyrand's position as an aristocrat eased Court doors for him and he waited assiduously on Louis XV and Louis' strumpets, gamed extravagantly with Court gentlemen, tricked and smirked with Court ladies; and he began to line his pockets, busy in dubious financial affairs, enjoying the license and glittering demoralisation of his most exclusive world. He loved and compromised the amiable Comtesse de Flahaut, by whom he may have had a son, to her considerable dismay, probably to his own, his *pas de zèle* having lapsed apparently for a while. He frequented the *salon* of Madame de Genlis and heard much of political and social reform; and later he paid intellectual court to the erudite Madame de Staël, a good friend to him; though in her final opinion he had all the vices of the old and of the new France. He secured an Abbey, bringing him rents, demanding little service in return, at length became secretary to the Assembly of Clergy, then Agent-general of his Order; by which time the gifts other than spiritual of this lithe and sinewy little man were known and he had won laurels as a wit, a well-bred courtier at once attractive and dangerous with his face of an angel animated by the spirit of a

devil, as was said of him pleasantly and with approval. The inordinate and indelible ambition of Talleyrand gave him no inward peace, though he had matured his outward calm, and the caution of a high-priest in diplomacy.

He wanted a bishopric. Louis XVI, however, differed from the former King; for he was a devout christian, when not hunting or eating, and expected piety and virtue from high churchmen, insisting romantically that a bishop must at least believe in God. Years sped before he reluctantly agreed that the Abbé de Périgord should receive a mitre and be known henceforth as Bishop of Autun, the last bishop named under the old Concordat; a Concordat about to be destroyed, and by the aid of this new bishop. The See of Autun chanced to be lean in the matter of supplies. Talleyrand used his wits and influence once more, had a rich Abbey apportioned to him by way of perquisite, and could live as he liked, showing no readiness to transfer to Autun and attend his obedient flock as a shepherd, though he wrote admirable and saintly pastoral letters. Then, suddenly, the bishop did in fact appear at Autun, spending himself in service, galvanised into quite unusual zeal. The States General had been summoned, elections were imminent, and he meant by worldly hook or sanctified crook to sit as a deputy in the new Assembly, as prompt as a Mirabeau to seize the occasion, he too foreseeing the chance to scale heights, in spite of his permanent limp.

He was elected, left Autun; and he did not return to his bereaved flock.

## II

Talleyrand knew that the old France of feudal privilege and present bankruptcy could not longer survive, that change was needful, reforms imperative; but he harboured no spirit of rebellion against governing

power, though he had sympathy with the victims of power, generous in abstract, as in deed occasionally. He was familiar with the literature of the century and believed that France should be content with her own frontiers, respecting the integrity and independence of other nations; and he supposed a people had the right to determine the form of its own government. He favoured *Habeas Corpus*, trial by jury, free trade, an unfettered Press, and revision of Law; but his liberal notions were tempered by an inborn conservatism and he shunned violence, deploring the emptiness and folly of retaliation, and brute force, no matter from what quarter, as something essentially vulgar, fatal to the advancement of ideas and the evolution of citizenship. The electors of Autun had given him no mandate for the destruction of the old order, though they too wanted reform; therefore in the early days of the States General he unobtrusively took sides with the Court and high-clergy. He anticipated crisis, speculating as to which extreme would triumph; a politician in embryo, an opportunist by design, a would-be leader in search of a party. The clergy elected to join with the commons, and join they did, led by the few progressive bishops, of whom Talleyrand was not one; for he assumed that power yet lay with the minority and the Court.

On the night of that day he tried to see the King; who, with the Queen, had gone to Marly on the death of their son. The Archbishops of Paris and Rouen were in audience with Louis, reporting the decisions of the majority-clergy, reassuring their master, convinced that they and their faction could yet win, if the King held firm against a union of Orders. Talleyrand followed the Archbishops to the Palace, not to the royal apartments; for Louis mistrusted the Bishop of Autun, would not give an interview, and sent him to the Comte d'Artois. Talleyrand in his discrimination and a fugitive candour expressed grief at the conduct



of the majority-clergy. He begged d'Artois to urge suppressive measures, and offered with help to form a government after dissolution of the present Assembly, suggesting that a new Assembly should be installed on a franchise different from the last; that armed display would prevent disorder. The Comte d'Artois gave his approval, went to the King; returned to Talleyrand, saying that Louis refused to interfere at this stage, earnest to avoid bloodshed. Actually, Louis had a plan, Necker's plan, for a Constitution. The Comte d'Artois added that he himself would leave the country at once, in despair of his royal brother. Talleyrand then said that the minority must now consider its own interest, the King having ignored the interests of the Court. The Comte d'Artois agreed, and they parted. Talleyrand had kept his sharp nose raised week by week, smelling the wind, and now he thought he knew the direction of the prevalent wind, certain that only prompt measures could save the Court, and that Louis lacked strength of will and the stability of mind to make any positive decision.

Talleyrand did not act precipitately. Constitutional monarchy and reforms were likely, and he let fall pregnant words to that effect, reserving an escape for himself if the situation altered again. When the Third Estate braved royal rebuke at Versailles in June, he took another guarded step, proposing that deputies be exempt from electoral mandates. Then he might be said to have glided almost imperceptibly rather than limped from his seat among the high-clergy to his new seat with the Third Estate. Here he stayed, not yet conspicuously vocal, he too a revolutionary; a nominal bishop, a most unapostolic and acute deputy. Probably on the night of August 4, and in the hurly-burly to annul feudal privilege, he lounged in his dignified calm and with his customary half-mocking faint smile, hearing the offers of his excited brethren, though he spoke of justice and discrimination; and a

week after, during the talk as to whether there ought to be compensation for such clerical forfeits, he rose and moved that the nation should resume possession of the tithes, not accept them as a gift. The men of the Left gazed in astonishment at this hitherto almost mute bishop, and they welcomed him as a sound patriot.

Talleyrand, like the rest of the Assembly, knew that the financial problem lay as a stumbling-block to all things; that initial reforms had driven the country into deeper bogs instead of paving solid ways; that deputies refused new taxation whilst the Court threatened their existence, so adding to Louis' bewilderments, laming his credit. Necker's shifts and subterfuge had failed, and within a year he would resign, disgraced, returning to private, moody life at Geneva, not to reappear. Louis had sent his own plate to the mint, and his people were invited to follow example; the banks could support no further loans, and financial collapse seemed inevitable; meanwhile, disorder, suspicion, fear, and the impotence of anyone to govern firmly and successfully tempted folk to elude the existing taxes. Revenue had fallen, and continued to fall.

The loss of tithes reduced church revenue, but church property remained, church lands were most valuable, and already in the past had attracted the greedy eyes though not the claws of troubled statesmen. Louis XIV had written that Kings were absolute lords, masters of their subjects' property secular and ecclesiastical, and could use such properties as wise economists in accord with the needs of the State. And now the nation had endowed itself, or meant to endow itself, with prerogatives formerly enjoyed by Kings.

Talleyrand had his plan, more bold than his fellows, about to voice an idea teasing many of them though not yet provoking them to action against tradition, prejudice, long and arduous historical processes, and outcry from good Catholics who practised the religion

of most French people submissive to dogmas. He knew the temper of the deputies, expert in the study of men; knew that a few were primed to repeat Voltaire's *Écrasez l'infâme!* with fervour, their minds fashioned by Diderot and his intrepid literary disciples; that many thought the church represented a moribund superstition and would soon lose the remnants of its vitality; that there were descendants of Protestants murdered or ruined or forcibly converted by Louis XIV and the Revocation of the edict of Nantes with its confiscations of property; also that innumerable French Catholics, Gallicans, and Jansenists were at enmity with Rome and smarted after years of persecution. In the meantime, though serious widespread notions of separating Church and State did not yet animate Frenchmen, incontestibly the reformers were determined that the Church should be subordinate to the State, that the State as the organ of the popular will must be omnipotent, therefore as arbitrary as an old-time absolute monarch. Talleyrand doubtless had measured all these factors; in addition, he had a profound and unfailing instinct for the raising of money, and resolved to pluck France from a financial morass, to gain public favour, a ministerial seat, authority; for the decree forbidding deputies to take executive office of any sort, ministerial or ambassadorial, guarding the representatives of the nation against the lure of honours, and aimed at Mirabeau, had not yet been passed; though pass it did, bursting Talleyrand's balloon, even as it burst Mirabeau's at the moment of soaring.

On October 9, 1789, the Bishop of Autun decided to raid the Church legally and memorably.

### III

The next day he offered his solution, addressing the Assembly quietly and without haste, always com-

plete master of himself on paramount occasions. The States General had been convoked originally and specifically to deal with a financial problem, as no doubt he reminded them, benign, gracious, analysing the present distress, affirming his belief in the sacredness of property as a prelude to his suggestion that if the State ensured the clergy from want, and in especial the most needy section of the clergy, then it was reasonable and necessary that the State should appropriate the immense properties of the Church, wherefore at least two million pounds a year would accrue to the exchequer.

During the days and weeks of debate on his propositions he seldom spoke, content to wait and peer in silence, unmoved by the gathering fierce animosity on the one hand, the enthusiasm and rigid insistence on the other, offering no remarks as to how church lands should be turned into cash to pay national debts.

Mirabeau had followed Talleyrand, saying that church property ought to be at once nationalised, though he too added that no parish priest should have less than a living-wage paid to him by the State. The clergy could not at first resist sturdily; they had already forgone tithes, and provision would be assured to them; but many were aggrieved, repeating that their generosity on the night of August had been abused without shame and would lead to their destruction. The Archbishop of Aix tried to compromise by offering in the name of the Church to advance a loan on a security of church property, thus to escape plunder by the legislature; but opponents said No, aware that such a bargain might establish Catholicism as a permanent State-church, a notion repugnant to agnostics and non-catholic deputies, to men ready to tolerate the Church as a social need while the masses were unenlightened, but not to stabilise it for ever. Other objectors pointed out that church property included schools, hospitals, charitable institutions, hence the State would encumber itself with heavy responsi-

bilities at present accepted by the Church. This argument also failed; and the fact became clear that a group of deputies were steadfast in their conviction that no corporate bodies of any sort existing apart from the State should retain properties free from State control. Talleyrand's proposals suffered alteration in detail, not in principle, and the motion putting church property at the disposal of the nation gained a small majority, forty deputies having abstained from voting, three hundred, including nearly all the Right, and men of the Centre, being absentees. Further conciliatory proposals ensued, and were slighted. Nationalisation supplanted mere appropriation.

A first issue of *assignats*, based for their credit on the new State property, were apportioned to the municipalities; who in turn and in time effected sales to citizens, forming a body of additional landowners, largely middle class, with a few peasants; men thereafter firm in support of the Revolution, for counter-revolution to them meant the abrogation of Assembly law, and reprisals, new confiscations. The *assignats*, before they became an equivalent to banknotes, were legal tender, and had the value of a political weapon; an exploited weapon, originally successful, giving rise to much difficulty and corruption later. The State had begun on the Church and could not pause, responsible as it was for the subsistence of the clergy. Monastic orders, dwindling, many nearly obsolete yet expensive in upkeep, were abolished, convents added to properties for sale, though a few teaching establishments survived for the moment; and the taking of monastic vows was forbidden by law, monks and nuns who chose to forsake the life being pensioned, that too for a time. In May, 1790, a Committee presented a plan for the reform of the Constitution of the Church in Gaul; and this in the logical and irresistible sequel gave birth to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

Formerly the Church with its numerous Sees and rich livings, its privilege and authority, had existed like an incubus on the national life. Now privilege and authority had to surrender to the State, the Constitution. The protracted debates on these matters roused tempers and prejudice on all sides, in and out of the Assembly; but the reforming deputies pursued their way, reducing the number of dioceses and parishes, and the bishops by fifty, leaving only one for each Department, nomination passing from the King. Old territorial divisions of France, the Provinces, had already gone, replaced by eighty-three Departments almost equal in size, and divided again for administrative purposes into Districts, Districts into Cantons, Cantons into Municipalities or Communes. Bishops, now State officials, had to court selection from the Committees of the Departments, parish priests from District electors, and electors could be other than Catholics; indeed, a form of presbyterianism ousted the old episcopalian order. Annates, sums paid by new incumbents to Rome, were annulled, and Rome as a directing power in the French Catholic Church went into eclipse, though after vexed debates it was decreed that bishops might be allowed to write to the Pope, affirming themselves good Catholics, if not sound Papists. Meanwhile Rome was not soothed in face of these affronts by the news that her subjects at Avignon were in open revolt and readiness to make part of the new revolutionary France; as they did before long.

The Assembly thought they had interfered only with church discipline, leaving spiritual affairs inviolate, likewise doctrine and form of worship, and so there could be no vital encroachment on freedom of conscience; and unquestionably many of the deputies were astonished though not in the least deterred by the storm that followed; nor could they understand at first the attitude of the Pope: had not Catherine the Great, when taking her predatory share of Poland,

reformed the church of that nation on similar lines, autocratically; and had not Rome approved finally? In all likelihood Talleyrand had not foreseen this Civil Constitution of the Clergy when he made his raid, though the subsequent laws were the natural outcome of his motion. On the occasions when he broke silence he appealed for tolerance, deplored hardship, protesting against the rage of votaries and partisans; and at some peril to himself when, months having passed, resistance became violent in the country. A full liberty of opinion, he argued, had its place in the Declaration of Rights, and claimed protection now; religious liberty, and for all, regardless of any particular belief. However, he approved of the legislation that made the Church Gallican and national, held to the Assembly and the spirit of revolution; and as he went about in society he shrugged his pontifical shoulders or smiled when old acquaintance turned coldly from him. He ignored criticism, rebuke, contumely, always bland, wary, unabashed; and he ordered his Autun priests to spend forty hours on their knees in the churches of his diocese, petitioning the Almighty to bring peace to a deeply troubled land. Nevertheless, the debates on the Civil Constitution proceeded among a chaos of other debates, and in July 1790 the measures were passed.

The most opulent bishops found their enormous incomes reduced to £1000 a year, the rest in proportion, though numerous priests hitherto impoverished and overworked were now relatively well off. Many of the clergy leagued themselves to overturn decrees by any means. This new situation, again in a strict logic, led to the enforcing of the Civil Constitution. Laws were passed whereby any Catholic holding preferment or exercising public functions had to take oath of fidelity to the new Constitution of France and to the laws affecting the Church. A clerical deputy, protesting against the Oath, warned the Assembly. "Take care!"

he said; "it is not good to make martyrs!" And the ensuing divorce between organised Catholicism and liberal institutions did in fact make martyrs. Only a small number of clerical deputies took the prescribed Oath, including Talleyrand; only about one-third of the entire body of clergy made submission; a number quite insufficient to supply the aggregate demand for priestly administration.

The non-juring priests, the Papists, were at first tolerated and allowed to officiate under restrictions; and at one stage the Assembly, the Constituent Assembly as it was named at this time, wanted to proclaim a liberty of cults and inscribe the law in their Constitution, faithful to the spirit of the Declaration, assuming that religious persons would be as reasonable as themselves. Now there were Papists and Constitutional Catholics, two separate and irreconcilable churches in France. The legislature had to breast the insoluble problem of liberty in relation to ordered government, and lost patience. Papists and counter-revolutionaries were regarded, and frequently with truth, as identical, and therefore drew punishment, cruel repressions, and wanted to inflict punishment if they could. Stubborn Catholics would not accept the Constitutional priests as genuine, and where local opposition was strong enough to prevent Papists from ministration, stubborn Catholics had their children baptised in hiding, though only the legal priests might register births, marriages and deaths. When local sympathies were divided, the respective faction priests scuffled for place, confusion spread and intensified, devilry increased, old fanaticisms were revived. The attempted concessions on the part of authority had failed.

There were long and wearisome arguments in council at Rome; and letters passed to and from the conscience-stricken Louis, who had appealed for help, beseeching spiritual advice; and after protracted,



abortive negotiation, Rome issued a papal Brief denouncing the Civil Constitution, and supported the non-juring priests, inciting revolts. The papal representative withdrew from the French Court; declaration of religious war. The Pope had written to Louis that if he, the King, approved the decrees of the Assembly, he would involve the whole French nation in error, his kingdom in schism, and might kindle the devouring flame of cruel war. Louis yearned to resist the Assembly, sure he would commit mortal sin, compromising his salvation after death otherwise; the Assembly refused to depart from its decisions. The Parisians set themselves in motion again, to intimidate their King. Louis feared bloodshed, the slaughter of non-juring priests, devoted to them with all the spiritual fervour of an impassioned Catholic; and he gave way, sanctioning decrees and the taking of the Oath, while secretly persuaded to retaliate if and when he could master the Assembly. He signed the decrees, and muttered that he would rather be King of a mere town than remain King of France under such conditions; but this should finish soon!

Thus Talleyrand's measure in its tortuous long development led to catastrophe, driving the majority of the clergy into open or covert rebellion, and a mass of Catholic believers into opposition to law and authority, reinforcing the aristocrats, creating a resolute anti-clerical party; and it planted Louis inalienably and irrevocably on the side of counter-revolution, for now he meant to seek armed intervention from abroad when he could; to escape from Paris, that also when he could. Talleyrand did not cease to sniff the wind in his sagacity. He realised that the Church could be no proper arena for his exploits thenceforth, gained applause from the democrats by offering to ordain the new bishops under the Civil Constitution; and quietly, always without ostentation, he departed from his sacerdotal ways, resigned his crook and mitre, forthwith

secularised himself, given wholly to civil statesmanship, spying for a new track devious or straight on which he might glide or limp to political eminence. The Bishop of Autun had become Citizen Maurice Talleyrand.

If the Assembly had separated Church and State outright, allowing a liberty and dignity to men in private and religious affairs whilst there was no interference with the liberty and dignity of others; if the Church as an institution had followed Christian doctrine, overcoming arbitrary habits in temporal matters and a jealousy of powers other than her own, all might have been well; but several years were to pass before the wisdom of such legislation made way. Otherwise, the nationalisation of church property and the Civil Constitution were not irrational in abstract, stemming financial trouble for a while, designed to give order to church discipline; nor could the Church logically resent intolerance, since she had practised it when able so to do for centuries. Good laws, however, needed more than abstract reason to prove their worth. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, failing to take account of disposition and temperament and historical association, outraged religious feeling; and so there was strife.

## IV

Through the early months of 1791, when men who had power were in conflict with groups searching for power, Talleyrand, now a member of the Department of Paris, doing administrative work, behaved with his customary discretion and prudence, supporting order, making no loud demonstration for or on any side; and he kept his modest popularity, had turn as President of the Assembly; but he was disquieted at the increase of violence, considering his own safety and comfort, assured that the general situation must be very much worse before there could be a durable

improvement. In addition to religious passions, and discontent in the Departments at the suppression of the ancient Provinces, new troubles arose with foreign powers, aggravating conditions at home. The danger of foreign war seemed nearly as great as the likelihood of civil war. Mirabeau, shortly before his death, was alarmed by the nascent hostility of England to the Revolution, and said that the enmity of England would be eternal, increasing in proportion to the growth of French commerce; but months earlier he had conceived the notion of an *entente* with England, arguing that war with any nation would be fatal to France; for the troops were unreliable, and much time would be needful to establish discipline among soldiers, as among civilians. Peace, Mirabeau thought, for a while, must be of substantive importance to reform; necessary to the makers of the Revolution, since nothing could be settled during war; necessary to the King, because war demanded capable administration, and Louis had no sound executive, nor could there be such a thing until the Constitution had reached completion; necessary to the people, who were already suffering unbearably. Mirabeau had his plans, shared in part by Talleyrand; and he thought Talleyrand was the man to represent France in England, to ensure peace with England.

Mirabeau died; not so Mirabeau's former ideas of policy abroad, developed in the mind of Talleyrand; who, as a deputy, might not take an ambassadorial or an executive appointment anywhere, yet could in effect serve as an unofficial agent of France, in touch with diplomatists, an intermediary for the exchange of ideas and proposals, wanting alliance with England based on commercial treaties; nor did he cease to aim for such treaties in the wearisome long years of war that ended with the temporary restoration of the Bourbons. And to England he went, in January 1792. He met Pitt and the premier's colleagues, had a chilly interview

with King George; had no interview with George's Queen, who refused to speak to him, abhorring any representative of the Revolution; and he soon perceived that Pitt at that hour was unready for war with France, though there might be much satisfaction in authoritative quarters at the hopeless internal condition of France. Men of the Opposition like Fox and Sheridan, however, were sympathetic with Talleyrand and the Revolution; and he noticed that walls in London were chalked with "No war on France!" and he had pleasure at the sight. His quasi-diplomatic work became more difficult with the frequent changes in the ministry at home, with the intrigues of *émigrés* against him in England, though he met others among them, old acquaintance, dined with them, as with English aristocrats curious to see the renegade bishop and to hear direct news from a revolutionary French nobleman; from this man strangely pale, often strangely quiet.

He persevered, spending himself in diplomacy, taking valuable lessons, patient and urbane in ever-increasing entanglements, picking a way among obstacles strewn over his shadowy, thin track; and he convinced himself that the British government would remain neutral, under conditions. His friendly relation to English radicals did not help him with Pitt's ministers; his acquaintance with *émigrés* did not help him at home. He went back to France to report progress, and was startled at the changes wrought during his absence. A second visit to England as adviser to Chauvelin, the new and accredited French ambassador in London, proved yet more arduous for him, difficulties having been amplified by the excesses of the Revolution and a corresponding English disgust; but Talleyrand held on, reiterating the good intention of France, yet more patient, calm, watchful, hampered by reason of his always ambiguous position, and the conviction of English politicians that the French monarchy tottered

and might fall, that revolutionary propaganda would light fires in Europe only to be quenched by war. He was yet spied on by Frenchmen in London, presently accused of negotiating on behalf of the Duc d'Orléans. He continued to believe that the British cabinet would ignore events in France, if France respected the rights of nations allied to Britain; and he returned to Paris, and at once saw that such a benighted country would be no place for him, that he must cross the Channel again as soon as might be. To this end he sought relations with Danton, powerful at that hour, he, too, anxious to avoid a rupture with England.

Hitherto Talleyrand had passed to and fro without much trouble; but now in the spread of harsh legislation there were passport intricacies. Danton agreed to aid Talleyrand, and charged him to prepare a memoir informing European cabinets of a new provisional French government, urging them to the recognition of such a government: Talleyrand must redouble the effort to prevent war with England. He was suspected in France, suspicion having become epidemic fever, and lived in no slight peril, his studied calm shaken at this unhappy stage in his political life. He repeated to his friends that they must get away from Paris immediately; that he was awaiting his papers, much concerned to decamp under a legal pretext. He pestered Danton, insisting that he could and would serve France, but certainly not in France; and his bags were packed, ready for instant flight. At last he secured a passport and was off within an hour, post-haste for a Channel port.

This time his diplomatic mission did in fact prove to be a mere pretext, massacres in Paris, the imprisonment of Louis, and other items, having scared the British government into the humour for war. Talleyrand was unable to do more in the way of a pacificator, and spent agreeable weeks visiting here and there, familiar with a few English nobles, and men like

Priestly, Canning, Romilly, Bentham, Charles Fox. He had been outlawed by the Convention at Paris, and could not return again if he wished to live, but he sent a memoir to the executive council announcing the militant intention of Pitt; who shunned him as a man perhaps treacherous, undoubtedly vexatious. Then Talleyrand was told to leave England within five days, denounced abroad as at home. He protested, could get no security; and at the momentary end of his resources, political and financial, he sold his library and took shipping for America; where he stayed for over two years, making shift as he could, and did, adventuring, speculating profitably, studying men and affairs, and especially American institutions, until, after the Terror, he petitioned the French government and was allowed to go home.

## v

Talleyrand had his delicate, always complicated and, for him, lucrative work under the Directory, and on the occasion of Bonaparte's *coup d'état* in November 1799. Thence his life-story was closely enmeshed in the history of Europe and proved to be a woven tissue of political intrigues and nimble duplicities with statesmen, Kings, soldiers, Princes, ambassadors, and women. He rose with Bonaparte, had his tactful part in the subtle and unrighteous machinery devised to turn a Consul into a First Consul for Life, then into an Emperor, and he became Grand Chamberlain, then a Prince. He had shaped history after the victory of Marengo, after other and more decisive victories; and though the liberalism in him no doubt resented the Concordat, that violation of republican principle and the Civil Constitution, he basked in high favour; so until the expedition to Spain and the attempted suppression of rebellion, when he ceased to be loyal to his master, helped to overthrow him and to promote

the Restoration, heedless of Fox's notion that Restorations are the worst sort of Revolutions. He reached the summit of his diplomatic genius at and immediately after the Congress of Vienna, able to turn with and to profit by each dominant wind; and his later ambassadorial work in London afforded yet another jewel for his political mitre. And so this Priest, Abbé, Bishop, Deputy, Secret-agent for the Revolution, Minister of the Directory, Minister under the Consulate, Minister and Prince of the First Empire, Head of the provisional government in 1814, Minister during the Restoration, and finally Ambassador under Louis-Philippe; this man Talleyrand, contrived to have his post-apostolic fingers in all affairs of State, and kept those fingers from burns and abrasions when most of his fellows suffered painfully, though he contracted much dirt in the process, did much laving of those shapely, dexterous hands.

A study of diplomatic history during the years of torment for Europe provoked the belief that there was no patently honest man left to share in the destiny of nations; and men unskilled in statesmanship were reminded of Swift's remark that whosoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow on a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together.

In the shady thick of Talleyrand's public life, he adroitly diplomatised his former priestly vows of celibacy into unobtrusive trifles and took a wife to his bed; and when she died years after, and he too at last faced death, yet calm and urbane, he played the final scene in the rich comedy or unconscious tragedy of his long existence; for his aristocratic relatives and distinguished male and female friends, profane and sacred, decided that he must die like a christian and a good Catholic in a diffused odour of sanctity. There

were difficulties, however: he was an apostate, not an apostle; much worse, a perjured widower over eighty. A council of sympathetic theologians gave themselves hopefully and bravely to the pursuit of their noble aims, and prepared a deed of atonement for the signature of the acute old warrior; an admission of error by a patriot who had incited the appropriation of church funds. Talleyrand was unequivocally true to himself, always in full possession of himself, showing no zeal in this curious business, and there were fears that he might expire unblessed and unsaved; but sign he did, the Church triumphed, and Talleyrand's friends wept in their joy; and presumably there was joy in Heaven over this repentant Bishop of Autun. He died in his eighty-fifth year, and Catholic friends thought he had gone hence to get reward and to wear a heavenly crown, since now he could do no more in the plaguey game of earthly crowns.

Folk said of Talleyrand that he would sell his soul for money. Napoleon called him a silk stocking filled with excrement: the most harsh and excessive of the numerous judgments passed on him. He astonished the world and, after the Terror, never permitted himself to be astonished, or dismayed, or hurried into panic by anyone or anything. He had much intellectual baggage, and an indomitable belief in himself, and in nothing else seemingly, except his conviction that the world was thronged with knaves and fools: shearers and shorn, he said, meaning to shear and not to be shorn; but there was bodily health and cheerfulness in this man free from rigid standards of public and private morality, who declared that strong men employ principles, that weak men obey them; and the best that could be said for him was expressed in a phrase of his will to the effect that, on reviewing his career, he found he had never abandoned a party before it had abandoned itself.

If Burke's theory that the principles of true politics



were those of morality enlarged had been applied to Talleyrand, then he must have damned himself irretrievably as a politician; and if fidelity to masters and friends had stood as a requisite attribute of men, then he would have been doubly-damned; for he was untrue to his ancestry, to his order as a bishop, to his faith as a Catholic, to his political associates, and then to his agnosticism. Therefore it would appear in the summary that he was true only to his own supple ego and to his engrained though not invariably malignant cynicism. He said that statesmen ought to be masters at home, while shunning the ridiculous and fatal pretension of mastership elsewhere. He had a genuine hatred of violence, the cruel follies of conquest-wars, and alliances for the aggrandisement of nations; and assuredly he worked for constitutional liberty, determined to be moderate and humane, so far as circumstances would allow. Tribute was paid to him for that. But deep in his heart and his brain he disdained men, and consequently men disdained him.





MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE

## CHAPTER VI

### LA FAYETTE; AND THE FEAST OF FEDERATION

#### I

AMONG the ironies in the tale of the Revolution, not the least striking was the fact that the decreeing of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, with its inherent enmities, synchronised with the Feast of Federation, a joyful expression of national and universal Brotherhood, the one preceding the other by two days. That Feast, on the first anniversary of the Bastille fall, was derided later as an example of sentimentality and hysteria, and revered as the impulse of men and women fervid to make end to conflict and to affirm a new social faith. La Fayette, the adored figure on that memorable day, may have been one of the least successful of Revolution men in a comparison of sum-totals and final values; certainly he was the most romantic and naïvely honest at a time when naïvety and honesty were rare and appeared to many as tokens of folly.

Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette, came of high and ancient Auvergnat stock, and in his *Memoires* he claimed to be a Gaul rather than a Franc. As a boy he had enough romance in him to love glory for its own sake, enough pride to resent the mere thought of school-punishment; precocious in knight-errantry, not otherwise; and the boy fathered the man. He never became a profound thinker, nor did he ever cease to play the political Don Quixote, humane, bold, credulous, spreading his evangel of freedom, hating all things cowardly and ignoble, sure that for a nation to love liberty it was sufficient that she knew it, to be free that she willed it. When past forty he wrote that his eminent reputation

squared with a great movement, therefore of necessity his enemies were those who wished to arrest the movement or to deprave it: a sentence defining him and his zealous labour from early to late manhood. In his thirteenth year, 1769, he was at college in Paris, an orphan possessed of much wealth; at fourteen he was betrothed, and married less than three years later, his aristocratic lady being not yet fifteen, not seventeen at the birth of their first infant; and that marriage kept its romance and unswerving loyalties to the end.

The young man, tall and sinewy, his hair a red of a sort, forehead high and retreating, nose long and thin, eyes set wide apart, soon took rank as a captain of dragoons, attended the Court and failed as a courtier, unable to dance with grace or to game with pleasure, having no part in frivolities and expensive absurdities odious to him and prescribed by Marie-Antoinette and her associates; in fact, the Queen scorned this awkward captain, heard him named a simpleton, did not hide her contempt and personal antagonism, and probably touched his morbidly sensitive pride at this early stage of their intermittent relationship.

La Fayette had audacity, and a cherished motto, *Cur Non? Why Not?* but interests centred in his own wife, which seemed peculiar to onlookers; in soldiering and especially books; and he drenched his impressionable, narrow mind and imagination with Rousseau, and formed indelible, mystical notions of liberty, justice, political and social freedom; notions unanalysed, never betrayed by a philosophic despair later, nor amended by contact with men and things: no battle in his brain; everything clear, shallow, and genuine. Always there was something youthful and ingenuous in him, and his views of 1830 were his views of 1789, and they again of 1776 when he first had news of America's proclaimed Independence. The moment he heard of the Anglo-American quarrel, he wrote, his

heart was enlisted, his only thoughts were to join the American colours. He made arrangements for a journey, impulse and action being nearly simultaneous in him; and he braved the displeasure of his ducal father-in-law, who sought to restrain him by *lettre de cachet* when he could not dispel the intoxication and enthusiasm of the young idealist.

La Fayette negotiated secretly with Americans in Paris, chartered a ship, paying handsomely from his patrimony; and after adventures and alarms, mishaps, arrest, disguise and escape, sail he did, to the noisy disgust of his wife's relatives, and the annoyance of a King not yet officially at war with England. He spent thrilling weeks at sea, reached America, and travelled hundreds of miles to meet Washington, his god at the moment, his chosen spiritual father; always his close friend and affectionate, gnostic correspondent thenceforth. Washington had divined the worthy high virtues, and the incurable flaws, in his disciple. La Fayette was slightly wounded in his first engagement at the skirmish of Brandywine, and had to rest and chafe for a while; but he proved a valiant soldier, though no genius in tactics, and yet more valiant as an apostle of freedom in America; and at home again when France and England were at war, loyal to his King, sure that now he must offer his sword to him, having returned to that end. America had enchanted him; a country, he thought, where liberty and equality prevailed, the richest man and the most poor being on a level, all citizens brethren; and thither he sailed once more, preceding a French expeditionary force after having been welcomed and honoured in Paris as a proven hero. The surrender of Yorktown made end to the war, and the French minister at Philadelphia wrote to Paris saying that the prudent, brave and amiable conduct of La Fayette had made him the idol of Congress, the army, the people of America. He was raised in the admiring glance of the world, suffused

with a love for popular acclaim equal to a missionary zeal now confirmed and strengthened, mastering that zeal in the long sequel.

He travelled over Spain, had warm invitation from Catherine of Russia in her mania for collecting famous men, visited Berlin and the great Frederick, an old and disillusioned man at that hour, and returned to France; nor had his renown much diminished in a country at last all agog for its own independence. He had lost favour at Court, however, about the time Calonne invited an Assembly of Notables to discuss finance, La Fayette having vexed authority by a brisk, unseasonable campaign in aid of Protestants, civil reforms and the like. Nevertheless he attended that congress of Notables, had much to say of harsh impositions and the cruelty in gathering taxes, praying the King to be merciful to piteous defaulters. Then he demanded an inquiry into the venality of State officials and the financial scandals involving Court favourites; and minister Calonne, afraid, menaced him, urging that he should be sent to the Bastille and silenced promptly; and doubtless only Calonne's own dismissal saved La Fayette. He proposed that the King should be asked to convoke States General; and he used the phrase National Assembly, and startled and angered the Comte d'Artois. Those States General were duly called, and La Fayette convinced himself that he must be faithful to his own Order, while longing to represent the Third Estate of Auvergne; for though the oppressive tactics of the nobles revolted him and their habits shocked him, he meant to fulfil his duty and to support the moderates. He gained election and went to Versailles, not quite at ease, hampered by his electoral promises and instructions, as sensitive in his conscience as in his pride.

On a night shortly before the opening of the States General, La Fayette, to amuse his wife, repeated a conversation at Berlin between himself and Frederick;

who, on hearing an account of America and Independence, had coined an apologue for the infatuated warrior. A young man, Frederick said, having visited countries blessed with liberty and equality, led a movement for like blessings in his own country. Did La Fayette know what befell that young man? No, La Fayette did not know. "He was hanged," Frederick said, grinning affably.

That apologue may have buzzed through La Fayette's head on more than one perilous day in the following years.

## II

La Fayette's political education in America had nourished his idea that a Republic was the best of all possible forms of government for a nation worthy to enjoy freedom; but his position as a French noble, with imperative duties to his King, forced loyalty on him and led him to a theory of a citizen-King who would serve as President to a government nominally monarchical, in essence liberal; or he may have seen himself as a French Washington under Louis. Hence there were antinomies at the root of his belief, always disguised to himself though not to his associates; and that fact coloured his public life and destroyed his influence finally. During the first weeks of the States General he sat mute and restive, harassed by the will of his constituents; but Talleyrand's motion liberating deputies from electoral dictation released La Fayette, and he said what was in him, fulfilling new duties without recoil or flinching. He made his first speech early in July, supporting Mirabeau's objection to the gathering of troops round and about the Assembly and in Paris. Three days later he presented his European Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens to an astonished and excited audience, though there were dissentients. His gospel took sap from



America, from Rousseau and the social philosophers, rang with a sound of liberty, trounced old privilege and gave impulse and direction to the decreed Rights of Man; and it carried him to the vice-presidency of the Assembly the day before the attack on the Bastille.

He leapt to the van, the most influential man in France for a time, able to slake his thirst for public favour while maintaining his austere rules of moral integrity and service. As vice-president of the Assembly he took the lead in a deputation to congratulate the citizens of Paris on their glory when the Bastille fell, to felicitate them on the shouted destruction of tyranny; and he was forthwith and unanimously proclaimed general of the National Guard, of the people in arms. He persuaded himself to believe that the National Guard could protect the King and guarantee the forthcoming Constitution; an excellent instrument, able to play any tune under his command, he said, if no one attempted to change the key, by which he meant the Declaration of Rights. La Fayette drew his sword and made oath to give his life to the preservation of liberty, always a little theatrical on august occasions; and affrighted citizens saw a safeguard in him, and unruly crowds hailed him as the assumed implacable enemy of the Court and counter-revolution. Often there was a dualism in the parts he enacted, and diversity among his admirers. As head of the National Guard he had at once to ensure and justify new institutions and to check the forces largely responsible for those institutions; and he upheld the middle-class character of the guardsmen, excluding poorer folk from the ranks. His immense and premature delight in his soldierly office lost charm as he faced the consequence and appraised the obstacles strewing his way, perpetually augmenting. He confessed that the people in their fury would not invariably give ear to him, surprised by this fact, beginning to suffer a disquiet that led to a sharp distemper. He resigned command impulsively, having

been unable to save two reactionaries, Berthier and Foulon, from mob-slaughter; but shame and indignation receded when the Commune petitioned him. They flung themselves on their knees, he wrote; they wept and vowed they would always obey him. He resumed a leadership in his effort to establish public tranquility; yet tranquility had gone from France, from La Fayette, though before long he was like a King of Paris, his fame enrapturing him, inclining him to fancy that even as Washington had saved America for the people, so he would save the people of France, likewise their monarch; and he did save Louis, and Louis' Queen, when the crowd marched to Versailles and returned victorious to Paris.

On the night of that October day, Louis' aunt, Madame Adelaide, embraced La Fayette, admitting that she owed her life and the life of her poor nephew to him. Marie-Antoinette, abased in her pride and sovereignty, could not forgive the simpleton of a general, seeing in him not a deliverer, but a personification of the evils that made such deliverance necessary. Her perverse dislike of him grew to hatred, intensified later by yet more baleful days fatal to her in part by reason of that proud, irrational distrust and contempt. And had he not been accountable for the odious three-colour cockade? red and blue, the colours of Paris, and white for the Bourbons; symbolical in its red and blue of all she loathed and feared; a symbol, he had said, that would make the tour of the world, an institution civil and military, triumphing over the old tactics of Europe, reducing arbitrary governments to the alternative of being crushed if they did not imitate it, and overthrown if they did.

The Commune offered a salary to their general. He refused. It was not for him to take the people's money in the present national suffering and want; his fortune sufficed for his needs. Louis' executive offered the Constable's sword to him, then the title of

Lieutenant-general, these by way of cajolery; and he said that if the King feared riots, let him trust himself to the National Guard for safety. And so the King learned that at least one man lived in France who was not venal, nor a subject for corruption. La Fayette said privately that if Louis refused the Constitution he would fight him; if Louis accepted he would defend him. He tried to enforce his theory of a royal-democracy, a mediator between King, Assembly and people, and recommended Louis to submit voluntarily to the Revolution and to break with *émigrés*, echoing Mirabeau, though not ready to work with him; nor with Talleyrand. He mistrusted Mirabeau, jealous of him, now and again misjudging him, faithful to his own notion of public and other rectitude; mistrusted Talleyrand; who, having sounded La Fayette in search of alliance, said the fellow had neither ideas nor resolution, and turned from him, offended. Mistrust was the blight on all men, then and after.

La Fayette repeatedly declared to the King that he would be responsible for public order if only Louis placed full confidence in him; but Louis could not confide in anyone, nor in himself. He trafficked with La Fayette, made semblance of trust, accepted the general's word; and sent his secret-agent de Fonbrune this time to Vienna and the Emperor Leopold, his brother-in-law; for he hoped to get succour and protection from abroad, enabling him to turn against the Revolution, betraying La Fayette, though Louis had not yet given himself cordially to the hazard of intervention-plots. La Fayette seemed never to lose faith in Louis nor to suspect incipient treachery, a simpleton in this matter, always prone to believe his own romantic travesties, unable to test his irreconcilable fictions by realities; and he held to his notion of a citizen-King steadily and doggedly, refusing to see in Louis other than such a King.

Meanwhile disorders in Paris and the Departments

extended; and the *émigrés*, greatly increased in number, with the Comte d'Artois as their leader, and Calonne as chief diplomat, attempted to stir rebellion against the Constitution, promoted and armed factions at home, and conspired in foreign Courts for war; unsuccessfully at first, European powers having their own envies and suspicions of each other, united only in their aversion to arrogant French exiles pompous in word; to aristocratic beggars wandering from Court to Court, many of them as noisy and rude as they were fatuous, gambling, dancing, whoring, a peril to themselves and their friends; astounding and at length exasperating Europe, and as vexatious to Louis as to foreign ministers. The Emigration in itself and not the Assembly-laws destroyed the nobility, an aristocrat said, the *émigrés* having abandoned their cause in France, ruined it abroad with their ambitions, intrigues, and quarrels among themselves. Their habits were known to the leaders of the Revolution in Paris, gave fuel to distrust of Louis and the Court partisans, added to the general and growing alarm. Withal, troubles in the Departments continued, provoking Assembly debates, and talk of stern repressive measures distasteful to La Fayette at that stage in his dramatic career. He added to his popular favour by affirming insurrection as the most sacred of duties against tyranny, yet he deplored unrest and thought he could end it. Had he not vanquished the King of England in his puissance, the King of France in his authority? and could he not soothe the people in their rage? His beloved Constitution must be propped with energy and force, all oppression must be resisted, all good citizens shielded; and he was ready to be oppressive to that laudable end later, struggling heroically to follow his ideals, labouring with more of valour than of political wisdom to solve his insoluble problems.

## III

In the early months of 1790, the majority of Frenchmen were proud of their Revolution, and they longed to give substance to the spirit of fraternity and compassion honoured as the rich warm heart of the new France, and so often violated. The idea of Federations became a reality when the National Guards of districts in the south met and took food and drank wine, swearing fidelity and obedience to the decrees of the Assembly, to King and Constitution, vowing they would act like brothers, united in fellowship and a common humanity. The movement spread, and the Civic oath taken in the Assembly by all the deputies and the King added new character and increase to Federations already numerous. The Paris Commune suggested a comprehensive Federation to be held at the Champ de Mars on the first anniversary of the Bastille fall, when deputations from the National Guards of the Departments and men from the army and navy would join with the Paris National Guard, all deputies, Louis and his Queen, and take oath of loyalty to the Nation, the Law and the King. The Assembly turned this proposal into a decree, in June, and had sanction from Louis.

The news impassioned France, as if at last all dissensions, jealousies and hatreds must go hence. Perhaps there was trace of a noble hysteria in the movement; nor did the Assembly escape infection. On a June evening they allowed Anacharsis Clootz, an eccentric, naïve and most voluble apostle of universal brotherhood to stand at the bar of the Assembly with over a score of fellows dressed to represent the nations of the world, here now to beg permission to attend the imminent Feast and make it international. Clootz and his motley charade-crew amused a few deputies, roused sympathy in others; for many of the Third Estate believed that the Revolution had not only

liberated France, but must bring freedom to the civilised world, making a federation of all peoples against despots. The Assembly had already decreed and the Constitution declared that the French nation renounced participation in wars of conquest, and would never use its power against the liberty of other peoples: a pacific resolution unable to withstand the realism of the age as months passed, and by fault of Europe largely. But a transfiguring idea had been glimpsed and shaped, and did not wholly perish.

Soon after the Cloutz incident, a deputy proposed the removal of a statue of Louis XIV with chained figures representing four conquered provinces; figures repugnant to Federation delegates from the country. A further motion led to the repudiation of all vanities, dukedoms and so on, hereditary nobility having been found distasteful to reason and incompatible with a true liberty. Deputies rose to support the motion, La Fayette agreed with all his heart, as he said; and though there were objectors the measure became law. Prudent legislators saw danger of further impulsive resolutions at the Champ de Mars, and the Assembly decreed that during the ceremonies of Federation they would receive no addresses, no petitions other than in their own hall. Then came a measure to determine the behaviour of the King on the great day, binding him to the people, to the new France; and he must appear as the rightful head of the National Guard, and take oath with the rest of them to remain united to all French people by the indissoluble ties of fraternity: a notable resolution, Louis' actual and abstract position having become a grave riddle for France, and for Europe, at that time. The Queen, the Court, some of the ministers and nobles, and Louis also now and again, revered Divine Right and were tacitly opposed to a constitutional monarchy; the mass of the Assembly and the body of French people were firmly persuaded that a constitutional monarch there should and must

be, and no other sort of monarchy. Louis swung alternately to Right and Left in his perplexities and disappointments, quickened no absolute trust in anyone; and the Civil Constitution drove him finally to reaction in spirit, in deed if and when he had power. The people wanted to be loyal: Louis defaced their loyalty. Foreigners in Paris could not understand how a people might shout "*Vive le Roi!*" apparently drunk with affection and devotion on one day, and allow themselves to be killed on the next in an effort to mar this or that royal prerogative. Louis was at once a symbol of the old and the new France, and inasmuch as he favoured one or the other in his weakness and simplicity, public opinion hailed or denounced him. Nearly all the crises during those months had Louis for pivot; and La Fayette's relations to the King on the one hand, to the people on the other, made the pivot of his revolution-history.

His sympathies were for the people on the day of the Federation, and he reached the topmost summit of his fame before night. The Commune were to prepare the Champ de Mars for the celebration, making provision for a multitude, and they engaged workmen in numbers not adequate to succeed betimes. Hence the people thought authority lacked the will to be ready by the Fourteenth, so they took matters in their own hands. Day and night, men and women of all classes, size and age, slaved with picks and shovels and planks and barrows, turning the scene into a graded huge amphitheatre, singing their *Ça ira! ça ira!* as they worked, encouraging each other, enlivened by bands of music; and they continued by the light of flares after nightfall, group succeeding group in endless motion, all happily agreed that not an instant should be lost; and labourers and peasants from outlying districts left their customary tasks at the appointed hour and ran to take share in the national duty, transforming a plain into a valley, finishing their gigantic

labour in a few days; over two hundred thousand in the aggregate having given service in a joyous mania of fraternal energy and hope. Deputations were journeying in all sorts of ways from all quarters of France, they too singing as they advanced, and cottages and houses were open to them everywhere for rest and refreshment, and towns and villages offered greeting, supplies, and a blessing in the name of France and the Constitution. On the eve of the Feast, Paris was crammed tight, any place with walls and a roof affording shelter, all sections of the capital having their privilege as hosts.

Rain fell viciously on the morning of the Fourteenth; but nothing could damp the ardour of crowds. "A beautiful day," said loyally untruthful report later, "especially between five and six of the evening;" the only hour when a moping sun peered from the grey pall. La Fayette on his famous white horse served as a thrilled and thrilling master of ceremonies. When the first of the many processions drew near to the scene, he sent word to the Assembly. The deputies began their procession, two by two and in two lines, huddled under umbrellas, soaked to their knees, they too nevertheless joyous; and folk gathered along the route and cheered them, followed them as they went through a triumphal arch and into the Champ de Mars, its terraced sides now dense with folk, the arena lined by National Guards, fourteen thousand delegates surrounding the altar to the fatherland with its musicians, priests, officials, its banners, decorations and favours. All were assembled by afternoon. Talleyrand conducted mass and blessed the flags of the eighty-three Departments, of the Sections and Societies. La Fayette mounted to the altar, and to a fanfare of trumpets he placed his sword and took the oath, swearing to be faithful for ever to the Nation, the Law and the King; to maintain with all his might the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King;



to protect within law the safety of persons and property, the free circulation of grains and provisions, the collection of public taxes under whatsoever form they might exist; to remain united with all French people by indissoluble and fraternal bonds.

The King took the oath in his own gallery and not at the national altar, never able to be thorough, always exposed to some or other untimely reservation: however, he swore to use the power the Constitutional act of State had delegated to him, and to maintain the Constitution accepted by him, decreed by the Assembly. The Assembly took the oath. And at the supreme electric moment of that incomparable day, the mighty crowd raised hats and arms and took the oath to a sound of guns and a renewed blare of trumpets. Then that crowd cheered Louis to madness, sang a *Te Deum*, praising heaven, also to madness; and they cheered anew as the National Guards climbed the steps, touched the altar in reverence and passed on. Presently La Fayette was encircled by men and women, and his face and hands and clothes and boots were kissed, and the very trappings of his horse when he took seat, the magnetism, the music and guns, and the oath, having wrought a havoc of emotion: "*Vive La Fayette! Bravo La Fayette!*" And Mirabeau stood unnoticed and mute in sight of this impractical theorist on a white horse, this romantic dreamer, picturesque knight-errant, *cabotin*, play-actor, as he fancied; this Cromwell-Grandison, Gilles-Cæsar, a man who held the army in the hollow of his hand and had not sense enough to use it! Mirabeau detested La Fayette; La Fayette distrusted Mirabeau.

The festival reached its close at night in the illuminated streets of the city. La Fayette had attained his zenith, and faced the descent; but he carried the wistful memory of that day to his grave, loyal through disaster and woe to its spirit, he believed in his tenacity and fortitude; loyal to the ideal of the people, to his ideal,

to an ideal France always the mainspring of his thought and action, even when he would have his part in the firing on crowds who had worshipped him. And the Revolution too as a creative, humanising force had attained its zenith, faced the descent, though the oath remained to sadden the realists, to animate the romantics, to supply shot for the cynics, decoys for the innocent, axioms for doctrinaires, dogmas for men crushing liberty on behalf of equality.

## IV

La Fayette believed in himself, his mission, the Constitution, in the good faith of the King, disliking facts and impatient of realities, wilfully blind to evidence that might gainsay theory, make end to illusion, and convict him to himself of credulity and folly. He may have repeated to himself, when in the vicinity of doubt, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." As head of the National Guard, as "Mayor of the Palace," in Mirabeau's derisive phrase, his urgent duties were to keep order and to establish the safety of the King: an onerous task after the Feast of Federation. Louis did not trust him, and dealt ambiguously with him; the people did not trust Louis; the army did not trust their officers, Louis' servants, old Court men. Already there had been revolts at Toulon, similar trouble in garrison towns; for many of the officers were unsympathetic or hostile and sometimes insulting to those who imagined salvation for themselves and for France in the Revolution. Army delegates to the Feast of Federation had been cajoled by men of the Paris clubs, by visionaries and others, and went back to quarters, tainted in their notions of discipline and fancying the old order had finally and completely disappeared. Army troubles were more frequent, and in August there was mutiny at Nancy. The men were

angry with officers, rightly suspecting anti-revolutionary design, and corruption in the matter of regimental funds to which the troops contributed and in which they had share. The men's leaders demanded justice. Two of them were flogged under disciplinary measures taken promptly. The town, and the National Guard, resented these inhuman severities, gave aid to the victims, threatened the officers. Other regiments in Nancy now demanded statements of regimental accounts and sent deputations to the Assembly to complain of robbery.

La Fayette was more of a soldier than a fraternising patriot at this difficult moment. In his alarm he acted precipitately. He ordered that men on deputation should be arrested, told his cousin, the inflexible Marquis de Bouillé, in command at Metz, to take stern measures against mutineers, and he sent the wrong man, Malseigne, to examine the regimental accounts at Nancy; for Malseigne assumed that common soldiers inevitably must be at fault, criminal, and so he provoked new disturbances. Bouillé accordingly marched with the Metz garrison on Nancy. Fights ensued, many were killed. Bouillé acted summarily in his triumph, hanged twenty rebels, terrorised the district; and a war-council condemned over forty men to the galleys. La Fayette, the King, and an apprehensive majority of the Assembly, congratulated Bouillé. Democrats protested hotly. Paris was divided in its opinions, Feasts of Federation were forgotten. La Fayette's popularity began to wane. He had resolved to protect the Third Estate. The Fourth Estate turned on him, steadfast in hatred; nor did they repent thenceforth. He frequented the now formidable Jacobin Club as a member, reporting to them, in like manner to the Assembly, anxious to retain the help of the Club in his steadily increasing difficulties; but here too there were suspicions of him and his relation to the King, enforced by Louis' flight to Varennes in June, 1791; indeed on

that day La Fayette was imperilled, for he had assumed full responsibility as a royal and deferential warder. Friends rallied to him, and he escaped harm in the streets when it was known that he had taken no active part in the flight; but that evening the Club barely tolerated him and his defensive speech. He said he had come to them because he knew they were true patriots. He was a true patriot. Desmoulins, in his account of the night, wrote that La Fayette had only two sentences, and turned them round and round like an omelet, keeping the stove for fifteen minutes.

Thereafter La Fayette had to act as a real gaoler to Louis, and he added to the detestation of royalists against him, fulfilling his duties respectfully, pleasing no one; and once more he lost heavily in public esteem when demonstrations against Louis took place on the Champ de Mars less than a month after the abortive flight to Varennes. On July 16, a petition framed by Danton and his friends asked for the deposition of the King and his replacement by constitutional means. The next day, another petition, this time republican and not constitutional, was placed on the altar of the fatherland for signature by men and women dissatisfied with the constitutional petition, and drew large crowds. Two curious impertinents, erotic and not political, had hidden themselves. They were discovered, and murdered by indignant folk. The Assembly, informed, took fright, misjudging the situation. They used the incident as a pretext, and instructed Bailly to take protective measures. He proclaimed martial law, and, in the evening, went with La Fayette and the National Guard to the Champ de Mars. Bailly read the proclamation. The crowds were vexed but not enraged. Stones were thrown, and someone fired a gun. La Fayette tried to be patient. He lost nerve, or temper, or strained calm. He ordered his men to shoot in the air. The crowd refused to disperse. The National Guard fired on them. There

was massacre, stopped by La Fayette, yet due in part to him. Repressive laws against ultra-democrats, republicans, and leaders of the popular societies, followed the massacre, and reaction seemed to gather head.

La Fayette, like Dion the pupil of Plato, had allowed himself to shed blood unwisely, for the public weal, he thought; but in his self-assurance he was not haunted by a spectre, emblem of mortal error. He had lost the respect of sound democrats, had never won the full confidence of the King, nor assuaged the visible enmity of the Queen, though cautious moderates admired his earnestness, his devotion to the Constitution, and served and encouraged him. He grew languid for a time in his industry and endeavour, left the National Guard and retired to the country; when war broke out with foreign invasion, however, he accepted a generalship and went to the front; now in declared opposition to the Jacobins, having helped to transform the *Société de 1789* into an opposition Club, the Feuillants, with their motto, The Constitution, the whole Constitution, and nothing but the Constitution. He thought the Jacobins were a hindrance and a torment, ruffians inclined to abet further anarchy and to ruin liberty; for he was unable by temperament and upbringing to realise that those who did not wholly share his ideas might also have their faith, earnest and honourable. He had no cognisance of mental and political subtleties, narrow and rigid in his particular faith, ensnared by his fancies. He was revolted at the subjection of the King, his citizen-King as he yet insisted, and addressed a manifesto to the new Legislative Assembly, denouncing factions and especially the Jacobins, that sect forming a separate corporation in the midst of the French people; and he called for severe measures in the name of the Rights of Man: the Constitution must be protected, together with the royal power assured by that Constitution. When he

heard of the raid on the Tuileries in June, 1792, he left his command and hastened to Paris to rebuke the people before the Assembly.

He harangued the deputies, chiding, and demanded the punishment of all enemies to the Constitution. He was asked if the Austrians had been crushed? Why had he left his troops? Why had he himself forgotten a principle of the Constitution, coming thus to the Assembly without a proper mandate? Many deputies tried to defend him; but when he had no more to say at the moment, feeling the atmosphere inimical to him, he went to see the King, further compromising himself with enemies who wanted his arrest. He had plans for Louis' escape, and was foiled by the Queen. La Fayette, she said, wished to save them; but who would save them from La Fayette? In addition, Louis' secret hopes were bound up with the foreign intervention La Fayette meant to resist to the uttermost. Louis had to review a body of the National Guard, and La Fayette begged permission to attend and speak to the men, engaging them in defence of King and Constitution. The Queen sent warning at night to the Commune of La Fayette's intention, despising him, eager to harm him, ignoring the fact that he risked his life for her and her spouse in his romantic loyalty. There was no review, in consequence; no assembled Guards to whom the old chief could speak. He returned to the army at the front, wounded in his pride, yet not disillusioned. Now he intrigued among officers to save the King from republican and other factions, could not accurately judge men and events, failed again. He proclaimed an insurrection led by himself, expecting his men to follow and other troops to join them; failed in that too, and for like reasons. He was now in peril of arrest, under accusation at Paris; his men were against him; and he fled from France with a small group of officers faithful to him and his cause.

## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

He thought of a temporary exile in Holland, or perhaps America, anticipating safe conduct through the Austrian army, sure the Austrians must welcome him, honour him, and delight to fulfil his wishes; yet another jejune assumption on the part of this immutable bourgeois-democrat intrenched in his fictions and unwholesome vanities. The Austrians had other views, and shared Marie-Antoinette's noxious prejudice against the man, regarding him as a hot revolutionary, a former gaoler of Louis, a republican disguised as a constitutional-monarchist. La Fayette spent the next five years in Prussian and Austrian prisons and fortresses, closely guarded after an attempt to escape, grossly ill-treated, though toward the end he was allowed to have his wife with him. He meditated on men and things, on injustice and ingratitude, wrote of them, recovered his serenity, if ever he had lost it; nor did he cease to adore his idea of freedom and the Constitution, nor add to nor take from his exiguous store of political wisdom, persuaded that the French nation had not changed heart since 1789, though there might be appearance of change due to bad men and bad laws, and to the savagery of invading armies.

### V

La Fayette was released in the autumn of 1797, the Directory having succeeded in his favour at the peace of Campo Formio. On his circuitous long way home he travelled in Holland, wrote to his friends, rejuvenated after silence, criticising the new executive sharply. He said that in the past he might have blundered, since he had been in constant action; but now he did not wish to add to his faults. Unless great occasion arose for him to serve liberty in his own way, he was not ready further to embroil himself politically. Later, he saw the despot in Bonaparte,

and no share for a La Fayette under the Consulship and the Empire. He refused to make obeisance to mere success, untempted by military ambition or a hope of plunder, faithful to himself though too positive to be seriously critical of himself, watching affairs closely from his rural retreat at La Grange, awaiting the day when he might return to public life to serve in his own way. Napoleon had a vigilant glance on the old royalist-republican, and said that everybody in France had conformed except La Fayette, who never budged an inch. Tranquil! yes, the fellow was tranquil; and forever in readiness to begin all over again! La Fayette, however, after Waterloo, could not traffic with Napoleon's conquerors and the new, restored monarchy.

He paid a last visit to America and was abundantly charmed by his reception, his fame being without blemish in that country. He had been elected, and re-elected, for parliamentary work at home; and suddenly he stood again at the forefront during the revolution of 1830, head of the National Guard once more, repeating his own astonishing and unexampled dramatic history, now over seventy, yet thrilled as in 1789 to begin a new liberty-crusade for France and the world; nothing timorous or slothful in him. And yet again he supported royalty, holding to his abstract notion of a republic, planting a supposed citizen-King on the throne when Louis-Philippe had accepted the charter of liberty. Here was the King they needed; here was the most republican solution they could find, he said at the Palais-Royal, showing the Duc d'Orléans to the people. He was disappointed by that counterfeit government, mistrusted by the royalists, and by the oppressed republicans, abused by conservatives and radicals; yet incontestibly not disillusioned, nor submissive. He went into a semi-retirement, appearing now and then to account for his actions in 1789 and in 1830, proclaiming his belief in a universal republic;



and his last writing sent to the President of the Society for the Emancipation of Negroes, shortly before his quiet death in 1834, was a warm avowal of faith in yet another effort to give freedom to humanity.

In his long crusading life, La Fayette rarely showed statesmanship, but his courage and unswerving moral rectitude and his fidelity to his own romantic views of the world and a citizen's place and obligations did much to atone for his invincible and at times disastrous credulity, alike as a politician and as a man; for he was insensible to facts in his slavery to one or two theories, and unreality became the pervading element of his days. The American triumphs made an epoch, not merely an episode, in his life, and he assumed that his ideas and ideals must be flawless when presented with lucidity and firmness to hungry peoples; and he never understood the flaming passion of men of his time for equality. In his missionary zeal he met failure, and urged himself to blame circumstance, witless or malignant opposition, rather than to reconsider or in any way to trim that insurmountable gospel according to La Fayette. His humanity and benevolence, very occasionally his humour, saved him from the more pernicious evils of self-righteousness; but he was tainted, as all men who lacked the will to discipline faith by reason or to test theory by the realities or acknowledge harsh facts at the sore expense of radiant fictions. He paid heavily for his vanities. His unyielding pride may have been partly redeemed, though certainly it was not sanctified, by its austerity. He cherished fame, surrendering to that last infirmity of noble minds, living in the glamour of his early and intoxicating successes; a glamour soon much tarnished in the regard of his fellows, never to himself.

More than once he had to choose between the people and the King, and he decided to believe that the people were led astray by foolish or vicious factions, that Louis could be trusted; and La Fayette failed

alike with the people and the King, and France had to suffer. He too knew that his countrymen wanted to be free and had not always striven to be just, therefore he grew impatient; and impatience marred his work as a leader. He referred himself only to the solemn tribunal of his conscience, and could never conjecture or imagine that others might also have tribunals different from his; thus his inclination to blame and despise his opponents, his inability to compromise, his indifference to the fact that honourable conciliation and a readiness to compromise might frequently be essential factors in politics and the management of folk. He may have been monumentally stupid again and again, but always he aimed to be sincere; and sincerity was high virtue when self-interest often usurped public interest and chicanery made an attribute of government.

La Fayette was a happy man, unwrinkled in his old age, cheerful, bold, fancying his perpetual and unchanged gospel must be indefectible; and there had been occasions when he thought he himself had attained perfection, though he could be credited with at least one admission of having blundered.

## CHAPTER VII

### BARNAVE; AND THE FLIGHT TO VARENNES

#### I

No eminent man of the early Revolution years, after La Fayette and perhaps Mirabeau, drew such impatient and often vindictive criticism as Barnave, the lawyer from Grenoble. He too upheld the Revolution at its start with the fervour of an evangelist, and he involved his life and popular fame in allegiance to the hesitating, slippery King, loyal when others were turning in dejection or abhorrence from Louis and permitting themselves to consider the inevitable approach to a republic; indeed Louis, after the summer of 1791, fostered republicanism by his tergiversations. Barnave was accused of romantically admiring the Queen on the return from Varennes, allowing his emotions thenceforth to swamp reason and to hale him from the extreme Left to the extreme Right politically, and Jacobins, one-time friends, censured him as a renegade, royalists as a demagogue who repented too late and deserved his tragic fate. He was manly, often gentle, sometimes impetuous, never wilfully treacherous to anything or anyone; and he took lessons from facts, so far as he could, always the zealous, middle-class radical, vexed alike by the tyranny of aristocrats and of ultra-democrats.

He was born at Grenoble in the autumn of 1761, his family Protestant, his sire a reputable lawyer stern to himself and his offspring, morally austere, quick to spy injustice, endowed with convictions of human right and dignity; and in these lofty matters young Barnave became true son to the worthy man, training himself like a youthful Stoic, earnest to quell impulse



BARNAVE



and to be a complete master of himself, aware of his own passions and sensibilities.

His parents took him to the theatre, the elder Barnave going to the pit, Madame to the only available box with her small lad; a box presently wanted by a friend of the district Governor. The director of the theatre and an officer of the guard came to Madame and asked her to leave her place. She refused quietly, claiming right of occupation. Soldiers were called to intimidate her. Sire Barnave hurried to his insulted wife. The people took sides with the Barnaves, the aristocrats against them. Barnave moved to the front of the box and told the audience that he and his family would leave the theatre, and by the Governor's order, to prevent disturbance. The next day, Madame declared she would shun the theatre if apologies were not forthcoming; nor did she reappear for several months, consenting finally because the place remained nearly empty and the staff were thus penalised. The incident horrified the young lad, and disclosed a spirit in the people which, years after, would lead to a minor revolution, prologue to 1789.

Before he was eighteen he fought a duel on behalf of a younger brother, as precocious in his idea of honour as in his not uncritical devotion to Montesquieu, his lesser devotion to Rousseau, his already pedantic dislike of Voltaire. Schools were for Catholics, not for Protestants, in those days of privilege, and Barnave was trained at home, though baptised a Catholic; for infants not so sprinkled might be taken from their parents, and could not expect civil status after. In his manhood he was neither Catholic nor Protestant, inclined to a tepid Deism, or a grave and thoughtful Atheism. His instinct for study and his restless spirit of enquiry led him to economics, politics, literature; and his parent forced law on him. He worked steadily, ambitious, self-conscious, fancying himself destined for great things, never faithless to his early notion of

a self-mastery commensurate with that enigmatic destiny.

At length he began practice in law, and gained notice, having been chosen to read an official discourse, taking for theme the need of a division of powers in the Body Politic. He made daring use of Montesquieu, affirmed a passion for liberty, gave proof of a spiritual independence disquieting to authority in the early eighties, as bold in his thinking as in his deportment; withal, prone to a solemn pomposity, as he wrote in his journal, watching and analysing himself as he recorded the evidence of his own growth, his troubles, delusive hopes and aims, afraid at times, and justly, that he lacked precision and simplicity. He would give more thought to work and learn to speak without notes, like a man well broken in; and work he did, ripening year by year, eager and ready to take a lead, to issue a pamphlet against the aristocrats; or to share a lead with his fellow-lawyer Mounier when, during the troubles of 1788, the three Orders of Dauphiné, the most industrial Province in France, held consultation and resolved by their own authority to have a local Assembly in which the Third Estate should be doubly represented.

Ministers of the Crown chose to treat this affair as insurrection, and sent troops to restore order; failed in a district united solidly against them, and saved themselves lamely by submission, agreeing that the Assembly should not meet at Grenoble, but might meet at Vizille. Here about five hundred deputies, with the intrepid, liberal Mounier as their secretary, passed resolutions condemning edicts, *lettres de cachet*, other abuses; and they demanded States General in each Province, refusing to pay taxes otherwise imposed. News of these calm rebels and their ordered doings spread through France and smartened the pace toward Revolution; and when elections for the States General took place, Mounier and Barnave stood high in the

voting, Third Estate men, Barnave being the youngest deputy to set out for Versailles.

He showed his mettle in the pamphlet against Calonne; who, safe now in England after his disgrace, had issued a work in the form of letters to the King, blaming his master's reform projects, attacking ministers. Barnave refuted Calonne, made it clear that People meant the entire nation, liberty a freedom controlled on parliamentary lines, demonstrating his vigour for reform, yet just in procedure, a monarchist; but the King, he argued, ought to have an explicit mandate from the people for his limited authority.

In the following years, Barnave had many political adventures, his principles, however, were unchanged in substance; and, like Mirabeau, he saw in Louis a guarantee against the re-establishment of privilege; nor did he believe that revolutions could be made by metaphysical phrases, since the people, without whom no revolution, could be influenced only by realities and palpable advantages. Always, he wrote, he had aimed for moderation and frankness, and if he had now and again seemed immoderate, then he had ceased to be himself for the moment. With such views he began his career as one of the acknowledged great orators of the National Assembly; with such views he died under the guillotine, paying for his virtues and his infrequent political follies; and maybe he suspected that individual rights and popular sovereignty were in a logical opposition, cognisant as others before and after him that History could make men wise, but would certainly make them sad.

## II

This young man Barnave, with chestnut hair and blue eyes, a prominent forehead, lips pursed slightly and as firm as the aggressive chin, at once drew attention in the Assembly. He spoke on the first day, and on



most important occasions; and unlike many deputies, who read their speeches, he improvised with an ease that seemed marvellous and excited envy. His legal training proved invaluable to him for logical discussion, his patient studies having loaded an agile mind with political and economic theory; and soon it was remarked that the outward calm served often and not always successfully to mask an inward flame. He joined the Breton Club, wrote their manifesto and first rules, grouped himself with the Left, and took place as a leader when his prelusive association with Mounier came to an end. He won credit, refuting Mirabeau in the matter of a name for the Assembly, rousing the chamber by his remark that they must not fear the Court and ministry: the King could have no reason for dissolving them, since he had been unable to resist convoking them; and royal sanction concerned only permanent laws, not the organisation of the States General. Soon he had repute among the Court faction as a militant anti-monarchist; as a malcontent to men of the Right. Mirabeau kept a sharp eye on him, teased, sometimes defeated or outmanœuvred by him. The conflict between the two men over Louis' claimed right to make peace or war, and Barnave's denunciation of royal wars and secret diplomacy, his demand for a revision of old alliances, for parliamentary control, made one of the most dramatic incidents of that year; nor could Mirabeau forgive his brilliant young rival; and Barnave's antagonism to his elder urged him to the Left until Mirabeau's death, though always he meant to be loyal to Louis whilst Louis was loyal to his people; and he voted for the suspensory veto.

His impulsive, notorious words about the murders of Foulon and Berthier delighted the extreme Left. Lally-Tollendal, a noble of probity and character, had lost his sire by wicked accusation and more wicked execution under Louis XV, and often he took oppor-

tunity to vindicate his parent as a martyr. In the debate on the murders and the need for stern measures, he fell into the customary hyperbole and tedious rhetoric, vaunting the name of his father. The son of Berthier, he said, had come to him, calling for help in memory of that martyred father. Barnave had no sympathy with unbridled mobs, nor with a man who gave way to hysterical laments when a situation demanded calm and deliberate action. Lally-Tollendal's irrelevant words angered him. He rose, nerves on edge, and asked was the blood of Foulon and Berthier then so pure? meaning to suggest that the Revolution must not be stayed on their account. He regretted the words soon after; words, he said, clutched by hatred and flung at him, noised abroad so that he met people who were astonished to find that he had neither the face nor the voice nor the manners of a ferocious man, and his soul was defined as a compound of saltpetre and blood, he as a monster from birth. That unpremeditated phrase stuck to him until his death; and was repeated by those who wished to dishonour him after.

Barnave, like La Fayette, had an inordinate love of popularity, though unlike La Fayette he knew his own weakness; and he had to pay for his vanities, for his effort in the early days to ensure the regard of the populace while seeking to placate the moderates. A long habit of self-analysis and criticism induced him to abate his zeal for drastic law. Home and foreign affairs, he insisted, must call for hard logic and cautious statesmanship rather than for patriotic avowals and revolutionary daring; and he moved by gradual stages from Left to Centre, though his faith in the Revolution could not be shaken. He helped to advance the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, had part in disputes over the Nancy mutiny, admitting the need for discipline, yet inclined to favour the men; and he was elected President, honoured on the Committees, admired for

his eloquence, though already he had made a distinction between an equality in civil rights founded on representative government, and an equality in social rights founded on the Rights of Man, obedient to the one, distrusting the other.

He allied himself to Duport and Alexandre de Lameth and their small following; the one, a liberal noble, sagacious, calm, hopeful, the other a sturdy and for a time a popular Third Estate man, an industrialist, voluble, grave, more prominent in affairs than his brother Charles, he, too, mildly progressive, and careful. Rumour had it that what Duport thought, Lameth did, and Barnave spoke; and they were labelled eventually as the *triumvirate*. Barnave quarrelled with his Jacobin friends over Colonial policy and the rights of the blacks and whites in San Domingo, where the Lameths had property and interests: were negro slaves entitled to citizenship or planters alone able to legislate at will? Barnave was accused of collusion with a group of adroit and scheming planters in Paris. He resisted the emancipation of the blacks, thinking as a politician rather than feeling as a man, considering what was expedite, at the cost of the humanities, wishful to free slaves, yet reluctant at the moment, aware of the political and economic results that must follow; and he persuaded the majority of the Assembly to agree with him. His colonial policy failed, by reason of a revolt in San Domingo fatal to any policy; and he was belaboured with that failure unceasingly. Hitherto he had been assailed by royalists. Now attack came from uncompromising democrats.

In his growing moderation and restraint he held to the Constitution and the fable of a citizen-King. His immense labours on the Committees absorbed him and he ceased to attend regularly at the Assembly; imprudently, in view of the opposition against him. He lost touch with old friends and followers, lost the

applause of the general public; and his constitutional principles became yet more intolerable to the extreme Right, his tempered liberalism and claims for the rights of property and a constitutional King more repugnant to a section of the Left. Republicanism was the incontrovertible outcome of the Declaration of Rights, ignored, neglected or unseen by Frenchmen before the proven defection of Louis, manifest thereafter and by due consequence; in fact, the position and conduct of Louis served as a touchstone for all opinion, parties, factions. Barnave in his wisdom realised that truth, likewise the seriousness of a problem neither accidental nor temporary for France.

After the forced sanction to the Civil Constitution, Louis thought flight was imperative, able in his ignorance to presume that France as a whole must be with him and not with the Assembly; that if he put himself at the head of loyal troops and returned to Paris, he could tame the Assembly, restore the Church to its old predominance and refashion a Constitution to his liking. The Queen had correspondence with the Austrian diplomat, the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, and her Austrian brother, the Emperor Leopold, helped by her passionate lover Fersen, an amiable, handsome and not too sapient romantic, formerly colonel of a foreign regiment in France, and who served his master Gustavus III of Sweden. Gustavus, a young man lusting for glory, less wise than bold, in league with the Russian Catherine, hated the Revolution and expected to command a European army of intervention, re-establishing a despotic Louis, dissolving the Assembly, outlawing all revolutionaries. Leopold professed to be ready to aid his sister, though stipulating that the King must leave Paris before he or anyone outside France could act; that Louis must revoke Assembly measures distasteful to him, and appeal to his loyal subjects. In any event, Leopold had decided that he would not move without European allies, a

saw in him a pledge against foreign invasion if he stayed at Paris, faithful to a Constitution, a definite rule and limitation of government alone being able to restore France and prevent civil war and general war; the Right awaited the resumption of the King's full prerogative; the extreme Right wished for the total suppression of popular government and the punishment of anyone who dissented from them.

## III

Whenever Louis was directly and personally concerned with any momentous affair there appeared to be muddle and blunder harmful to himself; for he had no skill as a conspirator, and might have lived worthily and died peacefully, a devout Catholic and a generous husband, if humbly born and not doomed to the unholy maze of State matters. Successful flight to Bouillé's army meant utmost speed and cunning, times having been planned almost to the minute; yet Louis travelled in a lumbering huge berlin sure to attract attention, and he wasted two hours over a dinner at Étoges, as if he were engaged in a pleasant family holiday, and so crippled the programme at the outset.

The royal family escaped from the Palace by an unguarded door at a late hour on the night of June 20, the King disguised as a valet. They crowded into a hackney coach and drove to the berlin awaiting them, conducted by a handful of trusty followers alone supposed to be in the secret. That secret was known, alarm raised, though not until an early morning hour. La Fayette hastened to confer with the President of the Assembly, and signed an order for the King's arrest. Couriers were sent after the fugitives. The Comte de Provence had also left Paris, taking a route different from the King's; and he reached Belgium in safety. Fersen drove the berlin from the city, left his friends at Bondy, going on alone to make preparation.

Louis, with his wife, two children, and his sister Madame Elisabeth, arrived at Châlons, and was recognised. He thought the most dangerous stage had passed, Bouillé having arranged for armed escorts thenceforward. The first of these escorts had aroused suspicion. Choiseul, the leader, waited beyond the scheduled time, and moved on. He sent word to officers at St Ménehould, Clermont, and Varennes that seemingly the King had postponed flight, therefore he, Choiseul, would return to Bouillé. The King arrived soon after, found no Choiseul, went to St Ménehould, where horses were changed. The berlin proceeded toward Clermont. Folk at St Ménehould fancied they had seen the King. Drouet, the postmaster, no doubt raised the alarm. Presently he was instructed by the Council of the town to follow the berlin with a companion, and to stop it. As the men of St Ménehould were deliberating, a courier arrived from Paris with official instruction. Meanwhile Drouet and his fellow galloped hard through the night and outpaced the berlin. He shouted his news at Varennes, barricaded the bridge, helped by tipplers from a wine-shop. They shut the highway. Soon bells were ringing in the neighbourhood, National Guards arming. A crowd surrounded the berlin when it reached Varennes. Louis told the postillions to hurry on, disquieted, hoping for Bouillé's men. Those men, on arrival, fraternised with the crowd and were useless to the King, hostile to their officer; Leopold's troops aided no one. Bouillé persuaded a small group to follow him. He drew near to Varennes, aware now by courier of disaster, having lost hours on the road. All was quiet in the town. Bouillé learned that the King was already on his four days' journey back to Paris. Bouillé rode away, crossed the frontier with a few officers, shot at by his men; and he went into exile.

News of Louis' flight stupefied, frightened, then

exasperated Paris. Crowds threatened La Fayette, ministers, deputies of the Right, certain the escape was a preliminary to foreign war. The Assembly met, took action, giving orders to all the Departments. They closed the frontiers, and forbade the removal of arms and ammunition. National Guards were mobilised, volunteers called for. Delegates with unlimited authority went east and west. Soon after the sitting began there had been cries for La Fayette and Bailly, suggestions of conspiracy. Barnave made himself heard in the turmoil. He said they must unite all their forces to save the country. He defended La Fayette gallantly, prevailed on the deputies to shun recriminations in the need for instant and vigorous measures, and did more than most men to restore confidence in and out of the Assembly. Paris now dealt quietly with the crisis, though there was indignation, momentary new peril, when the news that Louis had left a manifesto spread through the capital. In that manifesto he bemoaned his woes and censured the work of the Assembly, retracting sanction to measures, exposing himself as an enemy to representative government, to his own oaths of allegiance; and he called on loyal men for help.

The Assembly ordained that decrees should be executed provisionally and without royal approval, and they declared themselves in permanent session. When La Fayette tried to excuse himself at the Jacobin Club, passions were roused, threats exchanged. Barnave quelled the majority, denouncing all who would not sacrifice hatred and private opinion to public interest, and who turned from the Constitution. He carried his motion that a letter should be sent to the affiliated Societies in the country announcing that the King had been deceived by evil counsel and estranged from the Assembly; that all divisions among the people were forgotten, all patriots united, the Assembly being their guide, the Constitution their rallying cry. Louis had

left the kingdom without permission, and he was guilty by intention. The Assembly solved the problem in part, and gave a demonstration of loyalty, by adopting the theory that he had been abducted; and in their Address to Frenchmen the manifesto was said to have been wrung from a misguided King, whom the Assembly would believe inexcusable only in the last resort. A new oath, Barnave's work, supplanted earlier oaths: all men must vow to die rather than suffer invasion, must obey orders decreed by the Assembly alone, maintaining the Constitution, sworn to by the King, against enemies within and without.

When the people heard that Louis had been arrested, they imagined salvation, and rejoiced. A further decree, again largely Barnave's work, announced that measures would be taken to guarantee the safety of the King's person and of the royal family and to ensure their return to Paris. Latour-Maubourg, an aristocrat and a liberal, La Fayette's friend and fellow-prisoner later, Pétion and Barnave were to act as commissioners of the Assembly. They had full powers over all forces and authorities, and must fetch the King, and protect him. Dumas, a sober, upright patriot, adjutant-general, would accompany them and command troops under their orders. Barnave did not underestimate the vexation and danger of his office; and when challenged subsequently, and defamed by an accusation of royalist intrigue, as he had foreseen, he said that the physical circumstance of the journey hindered private conference: always they were seven in a carriage on the road, and the commissioners never left each other in houses where they baited, and had little sleep, orders being continuous, the precautions adopted strict and never devised by stealth. Again and again he denied that his opinions had been altered by that journey. Yet in his impolitic sympathy, the tears of the Queen wrought on him and he meant to save the defeated pair, while remaining staunch to the Assembly and the Constitution.



The commissioners had left orders along the road in preparation for the return, having been received with joy in village and hamlet. They met the King about sunset in a time of drought, intense heat, dust. The berlin stood in the thick of rural Guards armed with guns, swords, spits, scythes and sticks. Folk shouted "*Vive la Nation!*" grinning at Louis, jeering at the Queen. Barnave and his colleagues marched gravely from their carriage to the berlin, preceded by an usher. Folk ceased to shout, but there was murderous intent against a discovered refractory priest; a poor fellow saved by Barnave's prompt action. Madame Elisabeth implored help. The King, she said, had not meant to leave France. No, Louis broke in, not leaving; he had said so; that was true; intended to stay at Montmédy—revise the Constitution. Barnave whispered to Dumas that those words must save the monarchy. He, and Pétion, an ardent man of the Left at this stage, excitable, versatile, much pleased with himself, were to be with Louis in the berlin. They suggested that some of the royal party should move to another carriage, to avoid overcrowding. Louis refused complacently: they would sit close. And close they sat, Barnave between the King and Queen, Pétion opposite, watchful, suspicious. They were indeed overcrowded, without rest in a stifling heat and tedium. Barnave was scrupulous, discreet, patient, reserved at first, avoiding the glance of the Queen. Pétion seemed a little vulgar. The young Dauphin sat on the Queen's lap, very fidgety after initial fright. Then he sat on Barnave's knees, quite cheerful, slightly relieving the burden of a dismal situation. And the berlin crawled on, hampered by its own weight, and the crowds surrounding it. They reached Dormans after midnight and lodged at the inn, dining in separate groups. Dumas spent the hours like a soldier, posting sentries, engaged with battalions of National Guard. They came from all quarters, as if to a conflict,

and were quarrelsome, then jocose, singing and dancing.

The journey began anew before six o'clock. Heat had increased, like the dust, and the rabble. Madame Elisabeth lectured Barnave on the misdoings of the Assembly. He listened attentively, careful to say nothing hurtful to anyone. Pétion motioned to the landscape, rebuking the King. How could Louis wish to leave such a country! The Queen spoke of the Assembly, of republicanism. She heard from the fulsome Pétion that Kings had nearly everywhere made the people miserable.

That night they tried to sleep at Meaux. Louis borrowed a clean shirt from the usher. The deputies sent the day's report to Paris by courier, and asked for a large force of National Guards to meet the carriages, fearing disturbance. And on the last day there were disturbances as they drew near to the city. They hoped to reach the Tuileries in the afternoon, and failed by several hours. Cavalry detachments of the Paris National Guard joined them at Bondy, and disputed their rights as escort with Paris grenadiers encountered not far from Pantin. Arms were flourished, the royal family was insulted. Barnave and his fellows took much risk in securing order. Safety measures ordained that the berlin must reach the Tuileries deviously, by the outskirts of Paris, not by narrow streets. Dense crowds lined the route, heads covered, and soldiers with arms reversed, as for a funeral. All were mute as the berlin passed. No loud insults here, no cheers. Postmaster Drouet followed like a hero in a carriage wreathed with foliage.

Louis gave no sign of alarm in his Palace, no contrition, and seemed unaware of the new, ignominious position under the rigid guardianship of La Fayette; not so the Queen, humiliated beyond anything felt hitherto, at once embittered and stung to resist by craft, force and persuasion having failed lamentably.

Barnave reported to the Assembly, blaming no one. He repeated the statement that Louis had never meant to leave France. There were ominous murmurs. He did not flinch in his narrative. Pétion confirmed Barnave's words. They heard that the Assembly had temporarily suspended the King, would listen to declarations from him and the Queen, then decide on the future. The following night, Barnave and Pétion reported to the Jacobins. Barnave took care to announce that he and Pétion had not separated during their journey. He impressed on his audience the fact that now there could be no doubt as to whether France would be free: Frenchmen had shown their will in that respect, and with energy enough to convince even the King and his Queen in their carriage.

The flight to Varennes had made end to concord between Louis and his people. The Queen may or may not have been convinced: undoubtedly she was not repentant, unable to surrender to Assemblies, to anything that deprived the King of autocratic power. Her brother Leopold wrote to the sovereigns of Europe, assuming they would share his wrath at this last outrage to royalty; that they would share his fears. This act of violence in France, he said, at once compromised the honour of all Kings, the surety of all governments; and they must act in concert to re-establish the honour of Louis and his family. . . . Leopold, who had lately reconquered Belgium after the revolt of 1788, then began to promote that concert. High time, he wrote to his brother, to save their sister and to stifle this French epidemic. Diplomatic relations between France and Rome had already been severed. Gustavus ordered all Swedes to leave France. Catherine, the blood-spattered, vicious and unsubduable great Catherine, refused to see the French *chargé d'affaires*. Spain expelled Frenchmen, and set troops in movement; and late in July, Austria signed the preliminaries of an offensive and defensive alliance with Prussia. Much,

however, had to occur before Europe seriously attempted to stifle the French epidemic.

Leopold's wrath cooled when he found that the powers were not yet disposed to concert. Russia was busy arranging a peace treaty with Turkey, and had designs on Poland, disturbing to Prussia and Austria, who also had designs on Poland, though Catherine urged them to deal at once and severely with France; but the powers were forever engaged in a general question of payment for intervention, and could not square among themselves. No concert yet. Gustavus talked like a proud warrior in his detestation of France and its menace by example to all unconstitutional, despotic governments, and he associated with the *émigrés*, who were rejoicing at Louis' misery, at a captivity that liberated them from obedience, allowing them to proclaim the Comte de Provence Regent. They fancied they were the real masters of the true France, discussed invasion plans, helped now by Bouillé; who exposed French defences to enemies of France, and spoke of leading foreign armies to Paris. Leopold met Frederick-William, the polygamous King of Prussia, at Pillnitz in August, ostensibly to see what could be done, not yet ready with his concert; and d'Artois, Calonne, and the *émigré* leaders, in their folly and conjecture, forced themselves on the monarchs, intoxicated with their own avenging plans, saying there must be a declaration, a promise of extreme penalties for seditious Assemblies, revolutionary chiefs and their accomplices. The Declaration of Pillnitz, signed by Leopold and Frederick-William, called on the powers to take efficient means of aiding the King of France; but it was conditional, having a diplomatic *alors et en ce cas* woven into its tissue. The *émigrés* used it to their own ends, and issued a manifesto from headquarters at Coblenz; a commentary on that Declaration, predicting atrocity, adjuring the forlorn Louis to refuse his signature to the Constitution; and they said they

would not recognise such an imposed act if he did sign.

That Coblentz manifesto inflamed France, convinced men that the Court and the *émigrés* were in league with foreign armies for the destruction of France; and it helped immeasurably to strengthen the Revolution and to determine the fate of the King and Queen.

## IV

Reproaches against Barnave followed promptly; indeed, before his return to Paris, Madame Roland in her prejudice and temper said he would bargain with the King, duping Pétion, dictating protestations and avowals so that Louis might cheat the Assembly; and her associates took up the tale, adding that he had been fascinated by Marie-Antoinette, had given his arm to her as they strolled together at Meaux and wove plots. Journals of the Left printed their scandal, pamphlets multiplied. Barnave, in effect, did join with Montmorin, Louis' minister, and the Lameths and Duport in their official capacity as members of the *Comité Diplomatique*, to pursue subterranean, anti-republican negotiations with the Queen and Austria, having the active part in what was censoriously named the Austrian Committee, discreditable to him as a statesman, since he was cozened; not disgraceful to him as a man battling in troubled waters, and heart-sorry for the Queen. He knew his acute peril and did not quail, though he refused to see Montmorin alone, making his visits in company, determined that there should be no political corruption.

After the interrogations of King and Queen, the Assembly decided that Louis should remain under suspension at the Tuileries until the Constitution was ready for his final and complete sanction. The Assembly governed without reference to him, and France virtually

had a Republic; nor did Louis thenceforth gain any serious consideration other than as a lay-figure at best, a trickster otherwise; and national defence at length ordained that monarchy should perish. Barnave had become the brain and spirit of the moderates, the constitutionalists, dismayed by the reaction against the King, anticipating civil and foreign war if Louis were deposed. In his great July speech he explained and defended his views, arguing that men who would sacrifice the Constitution to their rage against Louis were imperilling liberty and promoting a new tyranny. Were they to end the Revolution now, or begin a second Revolution? Disorders could not cease till the Revolution was wholly and peaceably ended by a common resolve; for if it took further steps in the name of liberty, royalty would be annihilated, if in the name of equality, property would be undermined. Men were now equal before the law, civil and political liberty had been established; and new demands would lead to ruin. He impressed the Assembly, and lost whatsoever of popularity remained to him outside. Nascent republicans turned on him, provoked the demonstration at the Champ de Mars when Bailly read a riot act and La Fayette's troops made slaughter. The moderates seemed to be in the ascendant, the extreme Left crushed.

Barnave and his friends, resisting attack on the King, trying subtly to justify him, had already dissociated themselves from the opposing section of the Jacobins; and they founded the Feuillant Club. Soon Feuillant policy held the field, popular agitations were driven from sight; and there was irremediable schism among the men who had made the Revolution. Republicanism began to thrive slowly: Louis had broken faith with the Constitution, and many constitutionalists were nearly ready to break faith with him. Barnave and his followers shunned extremes in their fugitive triumph, earnest for peace at home and

abroad; and therefore they lost ground. They meant to revise the Constitution in strict line with their limited-monarchy notions, strengthening the executive, stabilising the throne; and they wanted to repeal the decree that rendered deputies ineligible for ministerial office, and were defeated, as in other cognate matters of grave import to themselves; for Barnave's constitutional scheme depended on just dealings between King and moderates, moderates and King, and he allowed himself to be misled, not so credulous as a La Fayette, yet deceived, stubborn in his false estimate of Louis, and notably of the Queen, who had become Louis' forceful executor.

Louis and Marie-Antoinette were prisoners of a sort at the Tuileries, meant to be free, and used guile. She wrote to Mercy saying they had neither power nor means, and could do nothing but temporise. She dreaded the intrigues of the *émigrés*, certain they were inimical to her, and to Louis' kingship, and that announcements of invasion and punishment endangered the lives of herself and her family. In her temporising she made pretence of agreement with Barnave and the Feuillants, hoping that the Constitution, the terrifying and monstrous Constitution, as she named it covertly, would prove a sham, and the people must turn against the makers and rend them; that in the ensuing chaos foreign armies would quell the people by threats, restore Louis to a full possession, and suppress the Revolution. But the moment was not auspicious. Meanwhile she had to persuade the constitutionalists that she was loyal to them.

Barnave wished to prevent foreign war by convincing Leopold that Louis could willingly and with dignity accept a revised Constitution and resume his office as a constitutional King, establishing order in France, avoiding any new revolutionary measures. To this end he and his friends corresponded by intermediaries with Marie-Antoinette from midsummer to

the end of the year. She professed to be in need of advice in her anxieties and perplexities; they were eager to advise her. They reminded her that she alone was mistress of her fate, the hour being critical; and she must not put faith in contradictory systems. She forwarded Barnave's letters to her brother, confirming them; and she sent further letters expressing her own views, denying her agreement with the *triumvirate*, decoying her gaolers, in her phrase; and she worked against them to their destruction. There were clandestine interviews between the Queen and her ingenuous counsellors, good faith being expressed by one and the others; and when Barnave sent the Abbé Louis to negotiate for his party at Vienna, with the approval of the Queen, she sent her own agent with word that the Abbé must be well received, heard, encouraged by promises, though she and the King were scheming only to gain time and, in reality, held always to their plan for a concert of powers arrayed against revolutionary France. Leopold knew that such a concert was not feasible at the moment. He had signed the Declaration of Pillnitz to cover his own weakness and in the hope of scaring Frenchmen.

He deceived his sister in those transactions, as she deceived Barnave and his fellows; as they deceived, or aimed to deceive, their foes at home. The Queen, in *her* credulity, assured herself that it sufficed to restrain the *émigrés* in order to escape civil war; that foreign intervention would restore pre-Revolution France. Barnave thought a revised Constitution would satisfy the friends of Louis abroad, make end to threats, and save property-holders in France. The marrowless Louis, at once resigned and hopeful, permitted his wife to think and to act for him, and awaited events, trusting fate or heaven to relieve him from his burdens and to raise him from public degradation. In the meantime the French people were loyal to their Revolution though suffering want and misery, blaming



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the Assembly for a shortage of work and food and money; and deputies were tiring of their labours, expecting imminent release, the elections for the new Legislative Assembly having begun in late summer.

The National Assembly had abolished all privilege arising from birth and position; now deputies were in coalition to ensure the privilege of wealth and property.

Enthusiasm had flagged here and there; not so in the Clubs. The Jacobins were eclipsed for the moment, distant from their later immense power, shorn of a Right wing now turned Feuillant. The extreme democrats were consolidating themselves, gaining strength; and fraternal and popular Societies and militant Clubs spread over Paris and France, in spite of restrictions decreed by the Assembly, of laws designed to suppress all combinations of citizens leagued against law, or even associated in effort to impose a uniform wage.

Such was the condition of France in the early autumn when the Assembly began final deliberations on the Constitution, resolving what laws were constitutional and irrevocable, what laws might be repealed or altered by Legislative Assemblies, what imperfections in the general structure needed attention.

### V

During those final debates, Barnave fought for his basic theory of a middle-class State that would alike control the King and the illiterate and unpropertied citizens. One of his opponents described him as entering the hall with his aggressive lower lip prominent, his eyelids narrowed, looking as if he meant to ignore all criticism, scorn, abuse; and the British ambassador wrote that seemingly the fellow had undertaken alone to carry the Constitution through the Assembly. There was storm when he pressed the

clause that the French Constitution represented the nation, that representatives and the King were the legislative body. The Left shouted that Louis did not represent the nation. Barnave carried his motion. Then there was battle, and compromise, over the franchise; yet the decrees prevented a mass of people from enjoying equal rights, the nation being divided into active and passive citizens. Active citizens, the real shareholders in the social concern, were men over twenty-five not engaged in domestic service and who paid direct taxes to the value of at least three days' labour; who were inscribed on municipal and National Guard rolls, and took the civil oath. They were to form the primary electoral bodies, choosing men with higher property qualifications for the final electoral colleges, though any active citizen might stand for parliament. The passive citizens were thought to be incapable of having an extensive share in public affairs: they were the Fourth Estate, the Sansculottes of the future, could not join the National Guard nor vote, except here and there in local elections. The Left hotly resented such a violation of the Declaration of Rights, arguing that any good citizen with a sound head and a French heart deserved to vote; and they could extract nothing but the suggestion that all help would be given to encourage passive citizens to raise themselves to the civil status of their active fellows, legislators meanwhile protecting the interest of all men, governing benignly.

Barnave and his associates failed to nullify the decree that deputies could not be ministers; and, much worse, that members of the present Assembly could not seek re-election for the new Assembly. He was opposed by men of the mortified Right, and by the Left, who saw in this measure a way of excluding the Feuillants from legislative power in the next parliament. The majority supported the decrees, and so the National, the Constituent Assembly, buried

itself politically. Barnave said that eligibility restrictions had destroyed the chance of making the Constitution serve for the establishment of real government; that the Assembly, hastening to a close, fancied it could end the Revolution by the wave of a wand, doing the labour of several months in a few days, running off, to leave its work unprotected and without roots. In the debate on whether the Constitution might be legally changed in the future without revolution, he told the Assembly that tranquillity was more essential than liberty to the bulk of mankind; political liberty, in truth, might be superfluous. He may have recalled Malouet's words at the time of the Declaration: why transport men to the pinnacle of a mountain and show them the whole realm of their rights, since legislators were bound to make them descend, to assign limits and thrust them back. Barnave had believed in those Rights; he believed in them now; but he thought more stringently of duties. He was charged with treachery and denounced as an enemy to liberty.

The Act of Constitution went to the King for sanction early in September.

The people of Avignon, a wide district under the authority of Rome, had sent delegates to beg for union with France, and the Assembly had hesitated, afraid of denying their own decree that the new France would make no conquests, steal no territory. Now, however, deputies were anxious to finish and go home; and they submitted to the wish of the Avignon majority, decreed the annexation, while reiterating their principles of no violence, and the free consent of peoples: principles maintained later, for a little time, in relation to Savoy, Nice, Monaco, the left bank of the Rhine, and Belgium. European governments took fright, at last armed with a pretext, additional to the claims of German Princes, when they should be ready to act against France.

Louis' letter to the Assembly, written by ministers

and trimmed by Barnave, accepted the Constitution and emphasised the need for unity and peace, discord and anarchy being the common foe. A day or two earlier, Louis had informed European powers that he would tolerate no authority other than his own in France, and looked to recover such authority by foreign intervention. Leopold assumed there was no immediate necessity for his concert, though there might be in the future; and the Queen accused him of betraying her, repeating her belief that so monstrous a Constitution could not endure. The King in his unquenchable duplicity, after failure and affronts, came to the Assembly to read the declaration of his unconditional assent. Crowds lined the way and thronged the public galleries. They cheered their constitutional King, adoring him since apparently he had joined himself with his people and a people's government, and now there would be no risk of intervention wars, all being well for Frenchmen restored to their King, as he to them; and a general amnesty would follow, alike for the *émigrés*, who were asked to return to France, and for all political prisoners, rioters, insubordinate soldiers.

The Queen and her children had a box in the hall. Louis' chair had been placed next to the President, sign of unity, though perhaps the King expected a throne and platform. He stood uncovered and began to read the oath of acceptance. The Assembly sat down, clapped hats to heads; for they were the sovereign power, representing the nation, to whom Louis made oath. He paled visibly, took seat, and finished his oath in confusion. Cries of "*Vive le Roi!*" echoed in the hall, continuing for several minutes. Louis and his ministers signed the Constitution. Now the President stood up to answer the King's speech. Then he also sat down, the King having failed to rise. Louis returned to the Tuileries, hailed by a multitude, nearly deafened by shouts and bands and guns and bells. Paris was intoxicated with joy; but Louis had no

thought for such things. He told the Queen in their apartment that all was lost; she had witnessed this humiliation! had come to France to see . . . He ceased to speak and began to cry. So said report. He had shown himself brave, calm before mobs yelling abuse at him; and now he collapsed at an infringement of etiquette.

He duly notified Europe of a Constitution established, asked his *émigré* brothers to come home, fulfilling public duty; and his confidential agents abroad were instructed to give the lie to public acts named as vain formalities requisite to allay hostility until foreign invasion might be practicable.

The Assembly held its terminal sitting at the end of September, and Barnave spoke twice. His last words in a discussion on the military penal code enforced the need for upholding proper subordination in the army by making distinctions between punishment for a like offence among officers and men; actually an example of his conviction that there must be cleavage between a Third and a Fourth Estate; this too remembered against him after. The Assembly dispersed, and an excited crowd met to see it go; and they hissed Barnave.

Those deputies were called in 1789 to solve a finance problem. Before they parted they abolished privilege and the old *Parlements*, announced the sovereignty of the people, invited all nations to free themselves in a like manner, declared Rights, swept away effete and chaotic systems of administration; they founded a single chamber Constitution with a King having executive power, exercised under his authority by responsible agents, and a suspensory veto, and a legislature elected every two years and safe from royal prorogation or dissolution; and though much of this legislation could not work and did not survive, the potential result, the essence of the Civil Code, proved indestructible, continuing after the Restoration. Those

politicians by their laborious sincerity and the effort to promote order, their courage, humanity, wisdom, earned the respect and gratitude of just men. They had their ambitions and antagonisms, and talked as perchance no public gathering before or since, and often they were ideologues rather than statesmen; but good will and conviction, previous to the flight to Varennes and the weariness that followed, seldom went down in face of personal spite and sullen pride; and their eloquence and skill were remarkable and original, for they had to create a parliamentary technique. They reconstructed France, scoured Bench and Bar and local authority, refashioning all things, demolishing centralisation; they suppressed torture and most of the legal tyrannies and gave all judicial and political power to the educated middle-classes—and they disfranchised considerably more than half the population and so encouraged class-war, blindly.

Europe represented the old order of the world, diametrically opposed to the new order in France; and though Revolutionary France might have remained pacifist in conformity with her declarations, Europe would and could not long tolerate such an example. Between French principles and European practice, it was said, there could be no conciliation; all the successors of the National Assembly were forced to accept that fact; and war was not bequeathed to them as a heritage from their forerunners, but lay germinating in the Courts of Europe. The nation became militant and predatory only when it departed from the luminous spirit and ideals of the National Assembly; though that Assembly had in fact decreed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, provoking feud.

## VI

Barnave stayed in Paris till the end of the year, directing the new Feuillant ministry, advising the

Queen, hoodwinked by her, and pleased by the transitory revival of Louis' popularity; but the increasing whirl of events, the suspicion of Jacobins and republicans, sapped his strength and further damaged his credit, and he went to Grenoble to live in retirement, studying affairs and the journals, corresponding with friends in a preparation for the future. He could read his books and develop his literary skill, and now, and later during imprisonment, he worked at manuscripts, printed years after, full of reflection on men and things and especially himself, exposing his flaws and virtues, likewise the flaws and virtues of much legislation in which he had often played a foremost and always an intense part. Turmoil did not shake his indestructible faith in the main principles of the Constitution, but he was alarmed by imminent war and the incompetence of his Feuillant acquaintance, the rapid new growth of the Jacobins; and apprehensive for his own safety when proscriptions began to follow accusation and old friends were jeopardised; yet he refused to follow the example of *émigrés*, and lived quietly at home, strong in his own unflinching political integrity and austerity, though wondering at times if an innate human impulse to evil rather than to good would not triumph in the agonised affairs of the world. He was a philosopher, not a theologian, wished to believe in a moral law and the omnipotence of mind, would not soothe his feelings and cloud thought by submission to sacerdotal notions of redemption by grace or delude himself with promise of heaven or fear of hell, sure that man could make his own heaven or hell on earth and must train himself to get the best from his moral and intellectual equipment and spend himself in a steadfast loyalty to ideas and to humanity. And he knew that nations, governments and men, usually reap what they sow; that repentance does not cajole punishment.

The new Legislative Assembly could at length

trounce the old constitutionalists who, said report, had designed to stem the Revolution and to restore monarchy at the expense of the nation; and Lameth, Duport and Barnave, the Austrian Committee, were impeached, word being sent forthwith to arrest Barnave. After August 10, 1792, the commissioners of the Assembly ferreted at the Tuileries for documents and found a Plan of the Committee of Ministers concerted with M.M. Alexandre Lameth and Barnave; a plan in line with Barnave's constitutional views and foreign policy, and assumed to be treacherous. Barnave, therefore, must be tried for conspiring against the Constitution, the general safety of the State, the liberty and sovereignty of the people. No one defended him in the Assembly, and his fellows outside were drowned in seas of mistrust, though even Marat wrote that the Plan revealed nothing to shame a friend of the Constitution.

The order for Barnave's arrest reached Grenoble and authority decided to grab him at night, fearing disturbance otherwise; for the folk loved their eminent citizen, and his National Guard battalion, though faithful to the Revolution, might protect him. He spent over twelve months in his several prisons, forgotten or ignored by enemies at Paris; and again and again he refused to take likely chance of escape, proud in his own sense of rightness, hoping anew when he heard that nothing had been found harmful to him other than Louis' memorandum at the Tuileries. He was haled to Paris in November, to the Revolutionary Tribunal, saw there could be no profit for him at that hour of summary justice; but he spoke with his accustomed gravity and ease, as if he were in the Assembly, vindicating his honour as a man and an old deputy; indifferent to the verdict, though his temper sparked when the President interrupted him. His prosecutor, he said, had been heard for over an hour: the justice of the people insisted that they should listen as patiently to him. He reminded the Tribunal



of his work for the Revolution, vowed there had been no change in his principles, that never had he himself corresponded secretly with the Palace, never had he himself visited the Palace surreptitiously: only a quasi-untruth, since he had schemed with others.

The Tribunal passed sentence about midnight of the second day. Barnave, and others, were to be executed within a few hours. He was trimmed for the guillotine, his coat-collar sliced away, and his hands were tied behind his back. He took place in the tumbril, calm, pale. The journey began shortly before eleven o'clock on that winterly grey morning. He looked here and there, talked a little, his self-discipline steadying him well at this hour. He was seen to smile, no doubt ironically, when the tumbril drew up at the Place de la Révolution and in view of the Tuileries. A priest among the prisoners wrestled and was strapped to the plank. A clockmaker three-parts dead from illness had to be carried to the knife. Barnave awaited his turn, composed to the end. Then this, he said, was the price of his service to liberty! Heads and trunks were packed in a cart, and buried with quick-lime in a trench dug for the guillotined at the Cimetière de la Madeleine.

So perished Barnave, two years past thirty and in the fifth year of a Revolution now beginning to devour its own children.

## VII

Barnave's aim in life had been to achieve a supreme command of himself and to direct men with his balanced, cold rhetoric to political wisdom and a patient humanity; and he meant all men, he like others of the Revolution having ideals wider than nationalism, deploring the jealousies and rivalries that sundered peoples, able to glimpse a far day when frontiers might disappear and nations would form a community, abominating war;

and he lived to endure bitter sharp moods when he fancied that perchance neither wisdom, happiness nor liberty could be assured by anyone to humanity; for, like Penn, he knew that liberty without obedience must lead to confusion, obedience without liberty to slavery. The Revolution, he wrote, had delved in the old earth to a new, fertile soil; but there had been accompanying foul vapours. And what spirit in this and that man! what courage in the masses! He imagined France would never wholly lose its new freedom; that much abuse had been demolished and could never revive; and he longed to maintain his faith against enmity, scorn, and disillusionment.

There was no vanity in him, though much pride, and sensibilities overwrought and harmful to him as a statesman; and he had his social ambitions. In his early manhood he loved men and expected too much from them, disabled by his and their unreadiness at once to detect falsehood; for he was tricked by Louis and the Queen, as the people were tricked by his opponents, turning against him, when in all good faith he had striven as a friend of order and progress, therefore, he believed, of them. He had argued that in an extensive country there must be either federation, or an immovable power at the centre which, unalterable save by law, would set barriers to ambition and resist the shocks and vibrations of an immense crowd stung by inherited passions; thus his fidelity to the idea of a constitutional monarch, the central power, a King. He was a leader of the Third Estate, impatient of other Estates.

The Third Estate made the Revolution, rousing the people, using them to their own profit and to establish a Constitution that gave most of the power emphatically and essentially to that Third Estate, dividing citizens into active and passive. The Fourth Estate were animated and inspired by the success of the Third against King, nobles and high clergy, and

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began to mistrust the promoters of the first revolution; and they made a second revolution in August 1792. The first revolution drew to its close with the end of the National Assembly; the second revolution had its visible inception soon after. Barnave fought to consolidate the first revolution and to prevent another, declaiming the rights of property, ardent to found a new enlightened and humane aristocracy of wealth; and he was ruined by the mendacity of a Court unfaithful to him and his policy, and by the new democrats, that Fourth Estate with its own ideals and devoted leaders. The Third Estate had succeeded in abolishing old France; the Fourth Estate would bestride the Revolution, for a time. Then the aristocracy of wealth rose again, using copious argument, seeking to tame lawless sections of a Fourth Estate and to conserve its own predominance, certain like a Barnave that by so doing it must and would save the world for a tempered democracy and ensure peace and as much freedom as might be compatible with tranquillity.

## PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

THE Legislative Assembly, reduced to seven hundred and forty-five members paid eighteen *livres* a day, met October 1, 1791. A deputy said retrospectively that the Constituent Assembly, the worker, had forsaken his work and delivered the Constitution to men who were going to shake it vehemently and crush themselves beneath the ruins. The process of shaking was evident almost at once; for although the Feuillants numbered two hundred and sixty-four, the Jacobins only one hundred and thirty-six, the Centre inclined to the Left. Jacobin Clubs had covered France, Jacobin enthusiasm and energy influenced the elections; and the civic and ecclesiastical oath prevented many devout Catholics from voting. The Feuillants were able to form a ministry approved by the King, but they could not manage the Assembly; and Feuillant deputies now sat on the benches of the old Assembly Right, and some of them wanted to give a full veto to Louis and philandered with bicameral notions. The Queen and the Court detested these men and aimed yet to delude and to break them. Internal divisions among the Feuillants weakened them irreparably; and when La Fayette stood as a candidate for the mayoralty of Paris, the Court indirectly helped to give a majority to the Jacobin Pétion. There was an abundance of lawyers in the new parliament, a considerable number of writers and journalists, many of them needy, all stored with theory and frail in a practical statesmanship; hence Third Estate ideology developed in the

Legislative Assembly, vanities and ambitions were soon in motion, and there was a scramble for supremacy.

A handful of bold young men from the Department of the Gironde, disciples of Voltaire and Diderot, quickly drew attention, and grouped themselves, forming a coalition, not a party, around Brissot, a popular Paris deputy, a man of letters, cultured, daring, benevolent; a social crusader familiar with England and America and a fancied expert in foreign affairs eager to justify himself and his utilitarian theory. He and his friends and their supporters barely tolerated the King, disparaging him; and as thoughtful and affirmed agnostics they refused to bargain with the Church. They had no patience with men like Barnave, scorning Feuillants, affiliating themselves to the Jacobins; and for a time they adhered to Jacobin policy, devoted to the intrepid Madame Roland. She had steeped her mind and spirit in Plutarch and Rousseau, she too a crusader, romantic, arrogant by excess of faith and courage, envisaging power for herself and her obedient and admiring spouse. Madame had her *salon*, attractive to Brissotins; whom she tried to appropriate, instilling them with her radical notions, her passion for liberty and against Kings, priests, tepid liberals, conservatives, though temperamentally unable to make distinction between personal and womanly antipathies and political abstractions, enslaved to her emotions while presuming she had disciplined herself intellectually. The Brissotins gained the regard of the Assembly Centre, undermining Feuillants and the ministry; and Louis and his Queen watched from the Tuileries, expecting to profit. The very extravagance of evil, Marie-Antoinette wrote to Fersen, would enable them to win more readily than anyone thought; but great prudence must be used. The Jacobins, soon the most potent organisation in France, rose as the Feuillants waned, and they were indefatigable in preparation, crowding the public galleries; and they

induced the Assembly to adopt the *appel nominal*, each deputy having to declare his vote aloud, expressing his conviction unequivocally; whereupon timorous members often abstained from voting, and others ceased to attend sittings.

Troubles multiplied at home and abroad, *assignats* had fallen in value, economic and social crises loomed over France; and measures were essential to subdue counter-revolutionaries, to restore confidence, economic and political stability, and to force recognition of the Constitution on European governments. Riots occurred in the Departments against soaring food-prices for which *émigrés* and the cunning of refractory priests were blamed; the firing of châteaux started again, on a minor scale, and there were analogous risings of Catholics and royalists, they too provoked by turbulent priests and Frenchmen in exile. Peasants, artisans, and the workless, dreaded foreign invasion and were perpetually in alarm; for had not Bouillé announced that he knew the way to Paris and would serve as a guide to foreign armies? had not *émigrés* promised that no stone would be left of the revolutionary capital? Such talk, known over France, darkened the general situation, helped the ultra-democrats and strengthened the republicans. Property-owners wished for a lasting reconciliation with Louis in order to ensure their own safety, and looked to the Feuillants for aid; and others in numbers growing rapidly had lost all trust in Louis, saw the land menaced by royalist faction, by Austrians and Prussians, and looked furtively to a vigorous Fourth Estate for help.

Brissot and his men allowed themselves to believe that outstanding evils could be removed only by war, and as a member of the *Comité Diplomatique* he was able largely to control foreign policy. A clause in the Constitution announced that the French nation would not undertake any wars of conquest nor use force against the freedom of any people. Europe had

answered by the Declaration of Pillnitz. Brissot thought he could improve on Constituent Assembly pacifism, extending liberty by armed propaganda: French soldiers would point the way of happiness to other nationals, saying they came not to make slaughter but to free peoples from tyrannous yokes. Robespierre protested, reminding his fellow-Jacobins that no one loved armed missionaries. Brissot would not recant. He said he knew the condition of peoples and armies abroad, arguing that no power would be able to take the field in haste; nor could European governments overcome their jealousies and lust and act in concert. Prompt and successful war must bring Louis under the heel of the Assembly, check the effort of refractory priests, crush the *émigrés* and solidify the Revolution, giving summary powers to the executive under Country-in-danger measures. Isnard, an eloquent Brissotin, versatile and implacable, with southern hot blood in his veins, said prophetically that Frenchmen need only fight for principle, not for State policy, and the force in them would transform the world. A minority of Jacobins were against war, certain that either Court roguery and defeat for France would reinstate Louis and end the Revolution, or that success would lead to a military dictatorship. La Fayette hoped for war and speedy triumph, whereby Louis, having taken refuge with La Fayette's army, would return to Paris, master of the new political situation. His friends agreed with him; other Feuillants, however, including Delessart, Minister of the Interior, an earnest mediocrity feeble in health, not without courage, wanted peace. Louis no doubt wanted war and did not want it; Leopold wanted to postpone war till Europe should be united for war; but his sudden death made way for Francis II, a young man inexperienced and obstinate, who most assuredly did want war and set about his preparations at once. In this concentric imbroglio, with its public avowals and private denials, war was

inevitable; and the Assembly became nominally responsible for war.

Deputies, about the end of their first month in office, began a series of raspy debates on the penal measures to be taken against fulminating *émigrés* and equally vexatious and dangerous non-juring priests, dissociating these enemies of France from the Declaration of Rights and the recent amnesty. Conspirators with their reiterated threats must either conquer or be conquered. It was decreed that the Comte de Provence should be given two months in which to return home, or he would forfeit succession to the Throne; that *émigrés* must likewise return or they would be regarded as foes subject to a death penalty; and later decrees, invaluable financial expedients, confiscated their properties. The Constituent Assembly had disendowed the clergy and pensioned them; the Legislative Assembly deprived non-juring priests of all pensions if they refused to take a new civic oath; and they added that priests could be deported if they did not cease to resist law and to incite disorder.

The Assembly decided to ask the King to demand that the Electors of Trèves and Mainz, and other Princes of the Empire, should prevent *émigrés* from gathering in their territory and from raising troops at the frontiers. Meanwhile Louis wrote to the King of Prussia saying he had already written to Leopold, to Catherine, to the Kings of Spain and Sweden, about a Congress of powers supported by armed force to check factious persons in France, and to re-establish order and stop the evil that harassed the land from spreading to European States. The King of Prussia asked for an indemnity wherewith to pay expenses, and Louis promised to compensate him in cash. Then he turned to his Feuillant ministry for advice concerning Assembly decrees; and ministers who were smarting from Brissotin attacks persuaded him to separate those decrees, opposing by his veto the re-



pressive measures ordained to school priests and *émigrés*; and he sent an ultimatum to the Electors of Trèves and Mainz. The Queen wrote to Mercy of these matters, saying the Feuillants were imbeciles who did not realise that an ultimatum served the Court; that if war began it would be incumbent on the powers to intervene, defending the rights of each and all. When Louis had notified the Elector of Trèves of his supposed intentions, he told the sovereigns that he ardently desired the Elector would ignore such threats; for, he wrote, instead of Civil War there would be a Political War, and things must be all the better for it: he, Louis, acted as he did in order that the French nation should find its only resource in giving itself to his arms.

Louis' vetoing decrees finally estranged the majority of the Assembly from him, and the pernicious situation forced a new, haughty and militant war minister on him, the aristocrat Narbonne, La Fayette's friend. Delessart, representing the pacific group of the Feuillants, retained his post; consequently there were irreconcilable forces at work in the ministry. Narbonne, during his three months in office, made a seeming and a temporary alliance with the Left, began to scheme for his own political ends, roused opposition among the Feuillants; and his dismissal was sought, and granted readily. Brissot and his majority impeached Delessart, accusing him of complicity with Austria, of failure to carry out the decisions of the Assembly. Delessart went to prison; to death a few months after. Threats poorly veiled were uttered against the Queen. Vergniaud, a fearless and profound thinker, a consummate orator, a cultured epicure too philosophically tranquil to retain command as a statesman, though no doubt the great man of the later Gironde, spoke of terror having often issued from Louis' Palace in the name of a despot, and that now it entered the Palace in the name of the law: let all who housed there know

that the King alone was inviolable, for the law without distinction would seize on the culpable and no convicted malefactor should escape. Feuillants besought the King to brave the Assembly, even to dissolve it, restoring Delessart to office; and the Brissotins gave speed to a rumour that they were about to impeach the Queen, to dethrone Louis and proclaim the Dauphin as King: extravagant rumour devised to scare the Court, though the Brissotins were in negotiation with at least one of the Court party. Indeed at this tortuous stage of French history it was not easy to find anyone among political leaders and faction chiefs who had patience, candour, freedom from guile: the insincerity of the Court had diffused itself like plague.

Louis surrendered to the Assembly, either from fright, cunning, mere inertia, or a combination of those factors, allowing his sterile and insipid Feuillant ministry to resign; and he turned to Brissot's friends; in effect, to the Jacobins. Madame Roland's husband became Minister of the Interior, enrapturing her, cooling her republicanism for the time being; and the acute Dumouriez, famous for soldiership, and his eventual perfidy during the now imminent war, took charge of Foreign Affairs; a gallant, a brilliant political mountebank who, in his venturesome, nomadic life had taken secret pay from Louis XV, had learned to detest Austria, and now promised Louis XVI to quiet his enemies at home by corruption and bribery, though he managed to cheat the Jacobins by a not wholly fallacious revolutionary fervour, and so kept his popularity, marching with them until he would be strong enough to march against them. Louis took courage. He did his utmost to weaken French defences, to hamper the manufacture of munitions, to urge officers to emigrate; and before war began thousands of officers did in fact leave France. The people rose as a nation vowed to stem foreign invasion, resolved

that France should take dictation from no one beyond her frontiers; and soon volunteers were being enrolled from all quarters and classes, in a war fever, at once hopeful and anxious.

The Austrian Emperor invited Prussia to help with twenty thousand men; and presently, old Kaunitz, Austria's foremost minister, announced that any assault on the Elector of Trèves would be resisted by arms. Prussia offered support if Austria would forgo claims in Poland; and Austria agreed to turn from the Poles to the French for spoil. Kaunitz demanded the restitution of the Pope's territory at Avignon, and the restoration of absolute monarchy in France. Dumouriez answered by giving Austria so many days in which to renounce a coercive policy. Kaunitz repeated his demands. Thus, on April 20, 1792, France declared war against the King of Hungary and Bohemia, the hereditary states of the House of Austria. Louis, dull and torpid, came to the Assembly and read a speech as if he were announcing the most casual decree in the world. He returned to his Queen. "*Tant mieux!*" she wrote of that day: so much the better! And she betrayed a war-plan adopted by the Council, sent news to the Austrian Court.

Louis' war speech had led to scenes of intense excitement in the streets of Paris, and in the Assembly. The people meant war, a deputy said; the Assembly must bow to the just and generous impatience of the people; the war decree would perhaps bring liberty to the entire world! They must declare war on all the Kings and peace for all the peoples! Less than a dozen votes were recorded against war. France challenged her enemies, divided as she was by political factions, snared as she would be by the Court, and her own generals; undisciplined and unready, her troops raw and ill-equipped and with only a third of the officers left; a nation in arms, the despised of a Europe anticipating prompt and easy victory; a nation illumined

and stimulated by a faith and endurance which, after disasters, would startle mankind.

The mistrust against Louis, clear since his flight to Varennes, became widespread certainty in the new, perilous atmosphere; and the political situation reflected the fortunes of the battle-fields, all legislation taking vivid colour from strife, all measures being dictated by necessity. War changed the character of the Revolution, though hope and aims were not lost; and the ferocities and devilry of the Revolution were due to instincts roused in a people fighting for existence against treachery at home and a deadly enmity abroad,

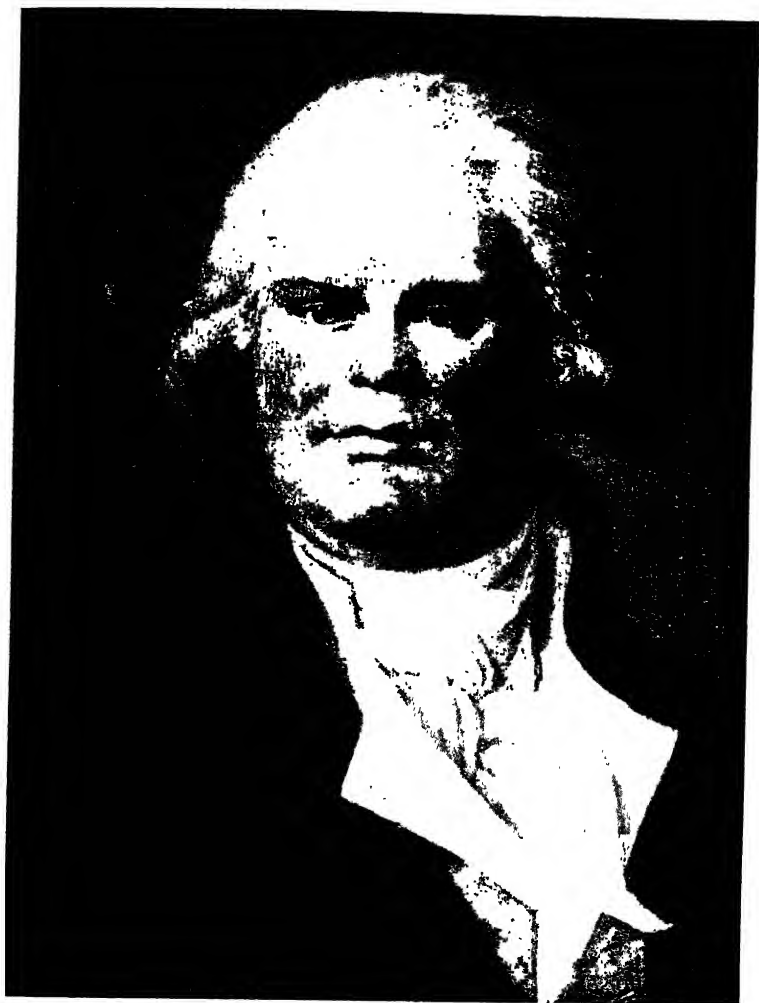
Mobilisation proceeded slowly. The King of Prussia left his capital, beginning the march on Paris, expecting to punish Revolution and redeem outraged monarchy; and England looked on, vigilant, not yet prepared to take a direct share, awaiting the hour when her specific interests would be demonstrably involved.

## CHAPTER II

### DANTON; AND THE ATTACK ON THE TUILERIES

#### I

MEN had emerged from obscurity in 1789 to battle with counter-revolution and spend themselves in the effort to found a liberal Constitution; and in 1792 a man great of heart and head came to make war on war, at first defying enemies like a warrior, then fain to negotiate with them like a statesman; and though on all occasions of crisis, groups of men rather than one man by his own isolated and creative talent gave new character to history, nevertheless in this war-crisis, one man did in fact stand out, unmatched by his fellows. Danton was named the very Hercules of the Revolution, aiming for the government of the people by the whole people, endowed with broad thews and shoulders, a furrowed wide brow, a face with scars and pockmarks, and drenched by the violence of liberty, as he said; and men spoke of his thundering voice, of gestures as potent as his words when he stood with left hand on hip, right hand beating air, menacing foes, his deformed thick lips quivering, eyes ablaze under tufted frowning brows, his whole being infused with organic force, sometimes blind and elemental. He inspired France to save itself and to make the second Revolution: complex, paradoxical, virtuous and sinful, a chief of a Fourth Estate and a jovial good fellow relishing slippered ease at his own hearth, able to browbeat critics and then laugh with them, at them and himself; a reputable lawyer known to sober proprietors as the excellent Monsieur d'Anton, before his days of tempest; sprung from sound middle-class stock and they maybe from peasants; worthy



DANTON  
(Musée Carnavalet)



Arcis folk, his father being an attorney at the local tribunal.

The elder Danton died in 1762, leaving several children and a patient and feckless wife when his son had reached his third year, disfigured already by small-pox, and a kick from a bull that split his lip; and the infant made war on the species, had another kick for his pains and this time a broken nose. A stubborn young madcap, this lad Danton, often in peril, more often in trouble; but he adored his mother, tried to be dutiful and helpful, and in his love for her he welcomed a stepfather when she married and began breeding again; saved his stepfather, a cotton-spinner, years after, liberal with his slender funds at a time of commercial difficulty. The Church as a career vexed him in prospect, and his folk allowed him to think of law. He learned his elementary Latin in the town, then began serious college work at Troyes, cramming his mind with stoical precepts and germinal republican theory; and he caught something of Greek, and presently had enough Italian to read Dante, enough English to study Shakespeare. He was frequently idle, restless yet competent as a scholar, and zealous in his general reading, familiar with Montaigne, Molière, slavish to Rabelais as he advanced in his teens. He found Diderot for himself, probably much of Diderot in himself, and assuredly he knew more of Hamlet and Lear, Falstaff and Toby Belch, than most readers of his age and period; in truth, there was more of Rabelais, Shakespeare, Molière, Corneille, in the man Danton than in any of his revolutionary fellows, and something though less of Rousseau; for his mind took root in stuff human and pulsing and he escaped the pit of the ideologues, jovially scorning abstractions, destined to grapple with facts, emotions, full-blooded reality.

There was a tale, likely enough, that during his last year at college, and in his reckless good-humour



and curiosity, he thought he would see for himself how Kings were crowned, escaped from Troyes and trudged seventy miles along roads thick with mid-summer dust to Rheims, to watch the pomp and glittering ecclesiastical mummary of Louis XVI's coronation; and trudged back, meditating on absolute monarchs, on Louis the Well-beloved, whom he himself was someday to uncrown. He went to Paris in search of fortune and fate, took probably unsalaried work in a lawyer's office, boarding with his master, frequenting the courts in the next four years; and the cafés, where he soon made way among budding lawyers, journalists, and the wordy young demagogues of a bohemian quarter, admired for his salted-coarse witticisms on men and things, his exuberance in political discussion, aware like the rest of State muddle and fraud, predicting the avalanche that must sweep privilege to limbo and clear France for liberty, equality, and a genuine unroped citizenship. He was called to the Bar, took work in the lower courts, with his glance on the High Court of Appeal, and saved what monies he could, hoping to buy the right to plead on diverse and involved matters with men of prestige, such positions being paid for as often as honourably gained in the upper courts before the Revolution. He fell in love with the pretty daughter of his café-proprietor, entranced her and married her, and had lodging in a house on the southern bank of the Seine; and with her *dot*, and the money he had and could raise, he became advocate in the *conseils du roi*, indebting himself, giving a bond countersigned by loyal members of his family.

He began practice after delivering an oration to the assembled college of lawyers, choosing for subject the moral and political situation of the country in relation to administrative justice, alarming elders who heard his cogent notions of reform, soothing others with a formalised, sonorous Latin. He drew attention

in the courts, now on the highway to durable bourgeois success and comfort, meanwhile entertaining his friends at home; for he kept plenteous board, prodigal of wines and fellowship, storing his revolutionary doctrine for convivial hours, exhilarated in his cups on behalf of the people and against despotism; otherwise and elsewhere a skilled lawyer and always an opportunist, not unprincipled, but malleable, suiting himself to circumstance; the excellent, most amiable and vivacious Monsieur d'Anton.

## II

Danton housed in the Cordeliers electoral District at the time of the States General summons. Voters met in halls or churches to elect the local assembly which in turn would nominate deputies; and whether Danton, now a Palais-Royal orator, presided over his District early in 1789 was doubtful, but he had become the President by October, the Cordeliers, as other units, having continued to meet for discussion after the elections; and they were soon famous with democrats, more or less infamous to the moderates, and hateful to the royalists. Danton took a lead, growing to his revolutionary stature like a tough plant in a forcing-house; and the Cordeliers electoral assembly became a small revolution within a greater, having Danton for master. He helped to stir the people on the eve of the Bastille attack, though there was no record of his doings on the bloody day. He appeared the next night, captain of the civic guard, with a patrol examining Bastille dungeons to see if the prison had verily emptied itself. Soulès, La Fayette's man, came forward to enquire the wherefore of this midnight intrusion, and refused to allow the Cordeliers to pass. Danton thought that diffident moderates were not yet aware of a Paris arisen to demand self-government and unlikely to submit to dictation from a La Fayette and

a Bailly. He argued with Soulès, arrested him, then set off with him for the Hôtel de Ville. Soulès proved himself a good citizen and had his freedom. La Fayette took mistrustful stock of this unknown leader of Cordeliers. Danton went back to his District, approved by a large crowd; who thought he had stifled a plot against liberty and turned to him as their guardian and spokesman. He was quick to profit by the incident, having given a first public demonstration of his belief in the rights of men to take direct share in local government.

La Fayette and his colleague Bailly had to face this fellow, and sought measures to instruct him, if they could not suppress him. La Fayette had no understanding of a Danton; and Danton, also purblind, despised La Fayette, saw a Malvolio in him, a eunuch, a dramatic coxcomb anxious to use the Revolution for himself and his kind.

At the end of August, the Hôtel de Ville invited the sixty Districts to send five delegates each, forming with the municipality a Provisional Commune who would sanction the new municipal organisation. The Cordeliers protested in a motion to the effect that the Districts themselves must assemble to decide on municipal reform; and, unsuccessful, they sent their delegates under imperative mandate, reluctantly, smelling conspiracy on the part of La Fayette and Bailly. The Hôtel de Ville rebuked the Cordeliers, sure that imperative mandates committing delegates were mischievous and would compromise the dignity of the municipal assembly; and the Cordeliers were told to cease printing manifestos, since that sort of thing disquieted the town. The Cordeliers retorted by imposing an oath on their delegates, and appealed to the National Assembly, irritating Bailly and the moderates. The Assembly joined with the Hôtel de Ville, and three Cordeliers delegates who had not taken the oath were ordered to sit in the municipal assembly. They refused, unready to brave an obstreperous

District; and the Hôtel de Ville allowed substitutes to take duty in spite of their having sworn the oath. The Hôtel de Ville won a technical victory and suffered a moral defeat, Danton having upheld the extreme democratic principle that representatives must obey their electors; and his conduct in this skirmish accounted for much contagious work thereafter in the making of French history.

His next dramatic gesture imperilled his safety and spread his notoriety through the city. Marat's journal, *L'Ami du Peuple*, had bespattered the moderates with invective. Marat was called to answer charges. There were warrants for his arrest on October 6 and 8, demanded by Bailly and issued by the Châtelet, a body of privileged lawyers having arbitrary powers, and who took their name from an old fortress in the town used as a prison. Those Châtelet powers, under consideration, about to be dissolved, were valid, though cramped in early October when Paris, and Danton, were agog with the rebellious excitement of the march to Versailles. Marat sheltered in the Cordeliers District. The Cordeliers were persuaded that liberty of the Press should be the complement of personal liberty, and they promised to defend journalists against impeachment. Nothing serious befell until January, by which time the Cordeliers had appointed a committee of five to protect citizens from arbitrary arrest, warrants henceforth, they claimed, having to be countersigned by that committee. Marat had resumed his viperous attacks, adding the Châtelet to his victim-list; and the Châtelet forced the arrest.

La Fayette loaned three thousand of the National Guard; veritable war on the unruly and irrepressible Cordeliers District. The District had its own guard, and artillery. Danton knew that a fight would end in his defeat, and chose to rely on craft. La Fayette's men surrounded Marat's lair, crowded the street, set cannon, awaiting orders. The Châtelet officers pre-

sented their writ to Danton. He stood with his friends, his staff, quite calm. He said that warrants must be countersigned by the committee of five. A discussion began. The Châtelet had blundered, sending an old October warrant, though the National Assembly had passed recent legislation, changing procedure. Danton was too wily to miss a legal point advantageous to him. He confused the officers, and they were thankful to go off to seek instruction at the Châtelet. The troops remained. Why all these men? Danton had asked; he and his friends need only sound the tocsin, the alarm-signal, and *battre la générale*, and they would have twenty thousand men with them, before whom these troops must pale. This was impudence, and sedition. He sent a deputation to La Fayette, demanding the withdrawal of the Guards. La Fayette returned an emphatic No. Danton scolded the officers in command, and led another deputation, this time to the National Assembly. He said he was a defender of the people against the baneful and nearly defunct Châtelet. The Assembly snubbed him. Hours had passed. The Châtelet officers at last came back with formal instruction. Danton and his staff were now more amenable. Marat had already escaped, and was on his way from the city, hence no rogue to arrest. The troops left the District, ironically cheered by an excessively merry crowd.

Danton was hailed by the Palais-Royal as the vanquisher of the Châtelet, and denounced by moderates as an incendiary; but he had no substantial wish to figure as a lawless demagogue, and made effort to amend himself and his Cordeliers and to win the esteem of responsible though democratic citizens. However, the *affaire Marat* engaged Paris; and in March, the unfortunate, maladroït Châtelet issued a warrant against Danton for his wild talk of sounding tocsins and raising thousands. Matters grew alarming; Districts were inclined to abet the Cordeliers. The

National Assembly ordered a report, in sympathy with Danton against the Châtelet, yet hesitating openly to reprove even a moribund establishment at an hour when anarchy seemed about to hum again in Paris; and they temporised, adjourning the affair indefinitely, permitting a report in Danton's favour to stand. He escaped arrest, not officially held blameless, partly forgiven. And he had won recognition as a live force and could take comfort from that. The excellent Monsieur d'Anton had become the redoubtable Danton to many of his old acquaintance, and to others.

## III

Danton became a member of the Paris Commune early in 1790, representing his Cordeliers; and during the summer of that year he worked at the Bar, prudent in his professional life, able to restrain himself, while making no compromise as a democrat among his supporters; and he was cordial, noisily gay at home, and fierce in prophecy as he studied the growth of revolution. The moderates tried to damage his repute, since they could not repress him. They accused him of taking money from the Court, England, the Orléans faction; charges repeated against him throughout his life, and after, never proven, many of them unsound, others not so, one at least bearing scrutiny; for Mirabeau in a letter to La Marck said categorically that Danton had received thirty thousand *livres*. Danton was prodigal with money, careless in his accounts, incurred heavy debts; and certainly he had monies, bought land; and if he took bribes from the Court he may have argued that to rob a thief was no great felony. He seldom entangled himself in subtleties of conscience or abased himself in memory of past sins, his glance being perpetually on the future; until the last months of his life when he saw that probably there would be no future for him; and then remorse bit at him,

blood having been spilled. No saintliness in Danton, no moral grandeur; streaks of an animal cruelty, taints of foul stuff, though more often a sense of justice, magnanimity in him; a gentleness of character, as an honest enemy-royalist admitted.

He dissuaded himself from the comparative quiet of that 1790 summer to oppose the re-election of Bailly as Mayor, stood as a candidate himself. Failure teased him, also the new system of local government that transformed the sixty Districts into forty-eight Sections with administrators, a municipal council, a general council. The Sections were to meet only for elective purposes, then disperse, unless a considerable number of active citizens summoned their fellows. This law against indiscriminate meetings was defied later, but Danton found himself for the moment without a platform, and his attempt to give voice to all citizens, active and passive, and at any time, seemed finally abortive, the Constituent Assembly ruling that the actives alone might take part in a full citizenship. The moderates apparently were masters of the situation, and of him. Despair or depression could not long hive in such a man; and under his inspiration the Cordeliers, now incorporated in the Théâtre-Française Section, founded the Cordeliers Club with their formula, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, though liberty to them, as to so many Frenchmen, usually meant power to impose control rather than exemption from despotic control. The Club, a Society of the Friends of the Rights of Men and Citizens, pilot-fish to the Jacobin shark, attracted workmen and obscure poor folk, the subscription being little more than nominal; and the Club became almost as famous and potent, in the city, as the Jacobins, to which Danton and most of his acquaintance belonged; and from the old monastery chapel they disseminated their Fourth Estate principles, serving as a nursery for republicanism, insisting on the suppression of all and anything that entrapped

positive democracy. Danton was not forthwith omnipotent at the Club, choosing to prepare the second revolution at his own fireside, not in direct and immediate contact with the actual human material to be moulded and used; and doubtless he spent time at Arcis-sur-Aube, fond of his home, never a real townsman committed exclusively to politics and tiresome faction, always in love with earth and sky, fields and a rural property; and to Arcis he went after Louis' flight to Varennes in June 1791.

The next month, Jacobins said they would not recognise the truant Louis XVI as their King, unless the mass of the nation took oath in his favour; and they framed a petition and took it to the Champ de Mars for signatures. The petitioners learned that they were too late to approach the Assembly, Louis, thanks to Barnave, having already been acquitted in part. The Jacobins withdrew their motion. Danton was conspicuous in this not irregular proceeding, the King being inviolable only so long as he held to his constitutional duty. Men of the Cordeliers were dissatisfied, drew up a second petition, anti-monarchical, and took this to the Champ de Mars. La Fayette and Bailly came with troops and made slaughter. Danton was not responsible, perhaps never a downright republican, though scorning a Louis either criminal or imbecile, as he said, divining the King's real intention and the corresponding peril to the Revolution and to France. The Assembly proscribed democrats, including Danton, shut and nailed the doors of the Cordeliers Club, and strapped the ultra-radical Press, for the time being. A warrant followed Danton to the Arcis district; but here he had the protection of his own people, and that warrant lapsed.

About this time his step-father had business in England, and Danton crossed the Channel with him, returning to Paris when the moderates were suffering as the result of their repressive zeal. Danton, however,



had been deeply branded, though safe from arrest when a general amnesty graced the end of the Constituent Assembly; and he failed to gain election to the Legislative Assembly, went to earth again and away from hurly-burly, as always on these occasions of check, solacing himself in the country, ridding himself of envy, not vengeful; and he rejoiced in his wife and family. Actions and reactions were many and speedy during those months: Mayor Bailly had to resign some weeks after the massacre at the Champ de Mars, and made way for the Jacobin Pétion; and in the elections for the *Procureur* of the new Commune and his substitutes, high positions in local government, Danton had help from his revived Cordeliers and the Jacobins, and became an assistant deputy; and though he did not win the trust of his cautious fellows in authority, the General Council, he forced himself into prominence, and now had a centre from which he could organise and direct the second revolution in less than a year. He opposed his colleagues frequently, battling for the Fourth Estate against the arbitrary rulings of the Third, made verbal war on La Fayette and the Feuillants, denounced the royalists and menaced the King.

## IV

Danton's climb was mainly due to the fact that he personified the spirit of revolutionary France in 1792: an eager, noisy, a violent patriot, nerved to stir the land to action and rout enemies at home and abroad, spurning the weak and timid and prudent, forcing a crisis in order to avoid national defeat. The Legislative Assembly alternated between lethargy and panic, divided in itself. Prussia and the German Princes had joined Austria. Russia promised and withheld aid, calling on the whole of Europe to unite in devastating revolutionary France; and Russia invaded Poland. The Brissotins had won distinction by their war policy

and could retain a widespread suffrage only by prompt victory; whereas French troops at the first encounter with Austrians on the Belgian frontier scattered, and fled after murdering their general. The Austrians advanced, expecting at once to occupy Paris. Brunswick, with Germans and *émigrés*, and in command of the Prussians, had an army of eighty thousand; less than he needed, the Austrians having failed to send their full quota; and after delay he and his men began a supposed quick march to Paris, pillaging, sacking, burning, hanging, and with hope of Alsace and Lorraine as a reward for intervention; and now Marie-Antoinette, acting through Fersen and appalled by the situation in the capital, urged Brunswick to issue a manifesto that should terrify Frenchmen and silence enemies of the Crown. The French defeats led to cries of betrayal in Paris, mistrust of generals at the front and politicians at home, and enforced the conviction of Court knavery. The Jacobins scolded the Brissotins, and they the Jacobins. Louis took profit from these dissensions and used his veto, once more on behalf of non-juring priests, many of them traitorous to the government; against the disbanding of the King's bodyguard, royalists who had not disguised their joy at news of army reverses; and against the formation of a camp of twenty thousand *fédérés*, nominally for the protection of Paris, in fact to resist a possible and royalist *coup d'état*: measures decreed by the Brissotins in the effort to check an aggressive Court faction, unreliable army generals, insidious priests, and to restore confidence. Louis dismissed the ministry.

The struggle about to crush him began openly in June, increasing bitterly each day, though he had withdrawn his veto against the disbanding of the bodyguard, obdurate otherwise; and Danton, at the Jacobins, avowed the need of inspiring terror in a perverse Court; and then he attacked the Queen, saying Louis

would be compelled to repudiate her, sending her home to Vienna. Dumouriez had attempted to form a ministry, going himself to the War Office, anxious to further his own designs. He failed to get Louis' sanction to decrees, resigned, in fear of exposure, and took command of the Northern Army. New Feuillant ministers, friendly to La Fayette and his anti-Jacobinism, were useless to do anything but add to a general exasperation. Brissot and his friends gave their blessing to drastic measures, hoping to force the King to recall them to office, to rescind his veto, to break with Feuillants and reactionary policy.

Danton believed that insurrection could alone establish the will of the people and make government and defence a democratic reality; that inexhaustible energy and resource could alone destroy the royalist ulcer that ate into France and had its core at the Tuileries. The Court, he said, were in league with the armies marching on Paris; and though the Assembly might proclaim the country in danger, as it did, and search for means of resistance, phrases were useless, endeavour was strangled by the Court. The day for compromise and bargain on the part of well- or ill-meaning constitutional-monarchists had gone. There could be no success in national effort while Louis sheltered himself and his forces at and about the Tuileries.

Danton knew the existing Commune of moderates inclined to the Right and would oppose his maturing plans. He called on the Sections to name delegates who would go to the Assembly, beg the dismissal of La Fayette, rouse the executive to vigorous action against royalists and traitors and enemies everywhere. He had no direct share in the June insurrection discreetly favoured by the Brissotins, when the people armed with petitions, and pikes, invaded the Assembly, overran the Tuileries. They swarmed around Louis, shouting for his approval to recent decrees. He talked

to them, drank with them, allowed them to perch a red cap on his royal head, good-humoured and smiling; and he was ready to die rather than capitulate to uproar or to discuss his veto with a mob, or to promise the recall of the Brissotins. There was humiliation for him that day, much nobility in him. His fine courage and serenity appeased the crowds. They left him at night, insurrection having burnt itself out for the moment. The Brissotins were not recalled; and they lost prestige in a fugitive reaction.

Danton had foreseen that times were not fully ripe, plans not sufficiently advanced. He had doubts of the National Guard, active citizens, many being loyal to La Fayette and the constitutionalists. Under a pretext of inviting *fédérés* from the Departments to join in July celebrations, reliable men were summoned, notably from Marseilles, the Mayor having been asked to send six hundred stout fellows who knew how to die. The six hundred marched across France, singing a hymn lately composed by the young Rouget de Lisle at Strasbourg; and that hymn, known to the world soon after as the *Marseillaise*, proved hypnotic and irresistible. The men from Marseilles showed their temper, killing an impertinent officer of the National Guard, wounding several of his men, as they tramped to quarters, the guests of Danton's Cordeliers. He could now rely on troops, and Section-delegates who would form a new Commune, a centre for revolt. As President of the Théâtre-Française Section, he issued declarations: the country being in danger, all must defend it; citizens active and passive were equally entitled to deliberate on a national, a patriotic movement; the present staff of the National Guard must give way to the commanders of the Sections, officers must take orders from civil authority. *Fédérés* swore they would not leave the city until all traitors, the Court partisans and friends of hostile *émigrés*, had been punished, or driven out; and Danton had his deputy-friends in the Legis-

lative Assembly to form a block and support the action of the projected insurrectionary Commune.

The Court had been warned of their peril. There were a few thousand armed men at the Tuileries. The Swiss bodyguard, sent from Paris, was recalled. Louis remained at the Palace, relying on forces assumed to be loyal; and he looked to Austrians and Prussians, intriguing to save the French monarchy. Danton and his men, weary of subterfuge and compromise, of disingenuous moderates and arrogant royalists, intrigued for France, about to wreck monarchy and clear the way for a national uprising against invasion.

The people were crazy with anxiety and alarm, expecting invasion, fearing the Court and the constitutionalists. They heard of troubles in the Departments, of ruinous food-speculators and monopolists, and thought La Fayette would march on the city and attack patriots. Brunswick's manifesto to the French people destroyed the frail chance of Court success, maddening crowds. He bade the National Guard keep order until the arrival of foreign armies, otherwise they would be punished as rebels; the citizens of towns, boroughs and villages who dared to protect themselves against Imperial troops would suffer the utmost rigour of martial law and their homes would be demolished; National and other Assemblies were threatened with exemplary and never-to-be-forgotten vengeance; Paris would be given up to military execution and total subversion if Frenchmen did not repent and bow to their King; and the word Rebels included all who had helped Revolution since 1789. Paris justly believed Louis had part in that manifesto.

Danton left the city on August 5. If disaster overtook the movement organised largely by him, he knew he would die, so he went to see his old mother at Arcis, arranged his affairs, made provision for his dependants. He left home and took charge of his

forces on the eve of the day when France would be henceforth sound for the Revolution or doomed to reaction and despair.

Before ten o'clock that night the Sections, following the programme, met and elected commissioners to form the new, illegal Commune and occupy the Hôtel de Ville at ring of tocsin. Cartridges had been distributed. The Marseillais and their auxiliaries were ready. The bell of the Cordeliers gave the signal at Danton's word, other bells clanged, drums beat men to quarters. Soon the General Council of the existing Commune, and the elected members of the insurrectionary Commune, were at the Hôtel de Ville, and in conflict. Danton arrived. He spent the rest of the night between the Hôtel de Ville and his house, directing men, soothing his wife. Mandat, commander of the National Guard, a devoted brave man loyal to his duty and to Louis, was under instruction from the General Council. He had ordered his defences round and about the Tuileries, much alive to the situation; had placed cannon on the Pont Neuf, highway from the Théâtre-Française Section to the Palace. Danton, as *procureur-substitut*, gave official guise to the new Commune. He raged at the General Council and made them annul Mandat's orders at the Pont Neuf. Thus the way would be cleared for the Marseillais to advance on the Tuileries. The General Council were almost defunct by four o'clock of the morning. They agreed under pressure to send for Mandat. He presumed he must report to the old authority, unaware of the new. He went to the Hôtel de Ville. And so the Tuileries lost the one man who might have influenced the National Guard on Palace-duty in favour of royalty. Mandat met Danton. He was told to obey the insurrectionary Commune. Mandat refused. He was dragged away, put under arrest, shot presently. The new Commune appointed Santerre, a riotous Bastille hero, to succeed Mandat. They threatened the General

Council in the name of a revolted people. The General Council made surrender and withdrew.

Louis reviewed the National Guard on the morning of August 10. He returned to his rooms in a palpable discomfort. Many of the National Guard already sympathised with insurrection and had jeered at him. He could depend only on his Swiss troops, and the aristocrats. He was induced to go with his family to the Assembly for protection. The Queen wanted to resist, and had to submit, as angry with her spouse as with her enemies. The Marseillais and an armed mob advanced on the Tuileries. The National Guard joined them, forsook the mercenaries, and the defence. The Swiss would not parley. They said they had their duty. They fired a volley, swept the courtyard, made havoc; continued to fire from windows and doors of the Palace. The crowd stormed them. The Swiss had been left without instruction or adequate ammunition. They were confused at length, betrayed by an order from the King to cease fire. Many were killed. Others escaped in good order through the gardens, and were imprisoned finally. The crowd had lost five hundred killed and wounded. They sacked the Tuileries and spread massacre.

The Legislative Assembly was shrunken in number when they received Louis and his aggrieved Queen, all the Right and many of the Centre being absent. Vergniaud, the President, assured the royal family of safety. They sat cramped in the reporter's box, a makeshift prison before Louis went elsewhere with his folk, no more King of France; and there they stayed hour after hour, listening to discussion and resolutions, in sound of the firing; and Louis ate cooked chickens and doubtless enjoyed them.

Danton, in all likelihood, had sat with his fellows at the Hôtel de Ville during the attack, a general at headquarters. Thence he sent orders to the Assembly, and they in part obeyed; for power now lay with

insurrection. The Assembly decreed that the King, chief of the executive, be suspended; that the French people be invited to form a National Convention to pronounce on the measures necessary to assure the sovereignty of the people and the reign of liberty and equality; in fact to deliberate on the future government of France and revise the Constitution; also that there should be no property qualification for electors, every man over twenty-five, excluding domestic servants, being entitled to vote; nor were there restrictions on eligibility for election. And so the old and invidious distinctions between active and passive citizens were abolished; and soon a democratic Republic would follow, though insurrection had aimed to dethrone Louis and to prevent his being able further to dishonour the country and vitiate national defence, the movement having had a patriotic and not a specifically republican basis.

The Assembly appointed a Provisional Executive Council of six ministers to serve till the meeting of the National Convention. Danton was named Minister of Justice, head of that Council, first official tribute to his leadership, and with Roland as Minister of the Interior. Danton embodied the entire executive in himself during the next weeks, paramount for a while. The Assembly continued to be submissive to the triumphant Commune, Danton's centre. They transferred Louis and his family to the people for safeguarding; hence imprisonment at the Temple under the jurisdiction of the Commune, until his trial and death. The Brissotins, the Girondins of the Convention, yet claimed a majority, but strength had passed from them after the failure of insurrection in June, new insurrection having prevailed in spite of them rather than by forceful help from them; and they were stubborn Third Estate men. Danton had appealed to *all* citizens, passives and actives, had provoked ruthless wild faction in order to attain his objective; and of the innumerable



grave problems facing him as chief of the Executive Council, not the least would be the need to quiet and control that intemperate faction.

## V

Now there were three bodies who meant to govern France: the Assembly, the Executive Council, and the Commune, monarchy and the first Constitution having collapsed; and the Assembly with its Brissotin majority had the nominal rule, and Danton's Commune, propped by the Clubs, would not forgo mastership. Foreign armies advanced; royalist, moderate and republican factions, war-profiteers and food-monopolists swarmed at home. Danton focused his talents on the national defence and besought men to suspend their quarrels and make truce. Would all their clatter destroy a single Prussian? he asked. The Commune had checked enemies at home, and now France in its entirety must concentrate against foes who threatened to subvert Paris. In his profession of faith he said he aimed for political and individual liberty, the maintenance of law and public tranquillity, the unity of the eighty-three Departments, the splendour of the State, the prosperity of the people; and not an impossible equality in all things, but an equality of rights and happiness. Men would not hear him, divisions increased, and there was opposition in the Departments to Paris and the Commune; yet he looked to Paris as a centre of revolutionary force, the hinge of national defence; and Paris localised itself at the moment in the Commune. The Executive Council gave little trouble, amiably subservient to him; not so the restive Brissotins, presently, urged by Madame Roland, who could not overcome her irrational hatred and jealousy of Danton and gave no serious thought to unity; and she and her intimates accused him of aspiring to a

dictatorship, and wished to avile him in order to ruin him. He was obliged to rely on the Commune, to listen to demands when his attempt to frustrate their rage against real and imaginary enemies and traitors failed. At the same time, Robespierre, vexed because no commanding part in the Executive Council had been offered to him, began criticisms, subtly disparaging Danton while ostensibly his friend.

Danton's imperative, ceaseless duties allowed him no time to consider subordinate difficulties, and he paid only slight attention to his Ministry of Justice, trusting to underlings, absorbed as a master and the voice of the Revolution, pervasive and dominant, having to win order from chaos, to control all departments and officials, to fashion decrees for all things, military, civil, naval, confronted with anarchy, invasion by Austrians and Prussians, forced to guide public opinion, to recruit for and provision the armies, to overlook finance and direct foreign policy, exercising his awful preponderance, as the watchful and envious Brissotins named it; and he sent his instructed agents secret and otherwise to the front to encourage the generals, and abroad to negotiate and, if possible, to dissolve the coalition by diplomacy. Imperial troops menaced France; Longwy capitulated late in August, Verdun early in September; and victorious armies marched onward. The news of defeats enraged the city. Danton said that France did not rest on Longwy; French armies were intact; only by a great convulsion had they annihilated despotism in the capital; and only by a national convulsion could they rid the land of despots. The Brissotins, recoiling and drooping, wanted to transfer government to a relatively safe Department, arguing that Brunswick would reach Paris within a fortnight. Danton made end to that panic by a phrase. His mother was seventy and he had brought her to Paris, Arcis being in the track of invasion; his children were already in Paris; and if the Prussians

were to enter, it should be into a city burned to the ground. He told the cautious and irresolute Roland not to mention flight: the people might hear him!

Paris was convinced that royalists and priests honey-combed the city and were in active league with Austria and Prussia; and the discovery and exposure of the Court's Civil List with its payments to *émigrés* and subsidies to anti-revolutionary journals heightened feeling. Folk shouted for an immediate purge of all suspected persons, the trial of the Swiss, the punishment of traitors. About the middle of August an Extraordinary Tribunal had been installed to speed justice: decrees announced that all the relatives of *émigrés* who remained in France would be dealt with as so many hostages; that refractory priests who had escaped recent legislation would be imprisoned; and Danton carried a motion authorising domiciliary visits and a search for arms and suspects. Consequently the prisons were full by the beginning of September. He issued a proclamation, calling all men to arms, the enemy being at the gates. Alarm guns were firing, drums beating, barriers were closed, horses and vehicles commandeered, and black flags hung over the Hôtel de Ville and Notre Dame. The Extraordinary Tribunal, influenced by moderates who thought of indulgence rather than of harsh justice, condemning reprisals, acquitted proven conspirators. The Commune had their own *Comité de surveillance* with powers to enforce trials; and a small section of the Commune, prompted by Marat, made ready to do their own exterminating, driven by the situation and the reluctance of men less bloody than themselves. Danton knew the temper of these fellows and tried to divert them, he too alive to the need for stern measures, yet opposed to massacre: let the justice of the tribunals begin, he had said, and the justice of the people would end.

On September 2, he told the Assembly that every citizen burned to fight: men were about to tramp to

the frontiers, others to dig trenches, others with pikes would defend the towns; whosoever refused to serve in person or to give up arms to the nation must suffer death: the tocsin about to ring would sound the charge against the enemies of France. And he ended by declaring that if France were to conquer she must be audacious: "*de l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace; et la France est sauvée!*"

That tocsin sent men to the Champ de Mars to form marching battalions, sent Danton thither. And it gave signal to others for the September Massacres, excused on the ground that justice demanded a terror against the legion of traitors concealed within the walls of Paris, and at an hour when men were preparing to march on the enemy after a long series of betrayals leading to the verge of an abyss. Brunswick's manifesto had warned the people of France; now a group practised what Brunswick had promised. Danton was not responsible. Later he said that no human power could have stopped the massacres. He made his effort to that end; but whether he made an utmost effort was questionable. He had compassion afterward; yet his laws had filled the prisons when he knew that massacres were possible. Acts of cruelty and tyranny in times of peace were abhorrent to him; whereas in time of war, he may have argued, as most orthodox statesmen, such things were essential to strong government, political or military necessities, imposed by the traditional formula, *raison d'état*. The crimes of the French Revolution were like the crimes of all governments or peoples enticed to make slaughter by envy, greed, or a dread of extinction.

Whilst Danton was engaged with volunteers and recruiting, prisoners being taken from the Mairie to the Abbaye prison were murdered by their escort. So it began. Mailliard presided over an emergency tribunal, dealt with the prison registers, having gone from the Abbaye to the Carmelites; other prisons had

similar tribunals. Prisoners sprawling and gasping were driven one by one to the expectant crowds outside and stabbed or clubbed at sight. Their bodies were thrown on steaming hillocks of warm flesh, and the executioners sweated and reeked, awaiting the next victim who would pass through the wicket for death. In five days over a thousand men and women were killed: Swiss, political suspects, priests, royalists, debtors, thieves, prostitutes. Here and there mutilations and obscenities took place; yet prisoners who managed by fortune or guile to convince the impromptu judges of their innocence were embraced by the crowds, taken to their homes and fêted. On the evening of the first day, the Assembly, after report from the Commune, sent deputies to interfere. They were helpless. On the second day, the Commune tried to interfere. They were helpless. Other attempts likewise failed, until the groups had sickened or tired of their sadistic work. Prisoners on their way from the Orléans High Court to Versailles were butchered. When the responsible *Comité de surveillance* dispatched a circular to the Departments, calling for the adoption of similar "means so necessary for public safety," there was further sporadic murder. Several of the Brissotins were endangered, warrants having been issued for their arrest. Danton had those charges withdrawn; and by so doing he stirred the distrust and enmity of men like Marat, spread his own path with difficulties and peril, soon to be challenged alike by moderates and the extremists as he strove with enemies abroad and for unity and obedience to his democratic war-government at home.

On September 20, the day before the National Convention met, French armies under Dumouriez gained a success at Valmy; and the young officer who rode at night with the news to Paris was the future Louis-Philippe. Danton used diplomatic cunning, and in all probability money; the Prussians retreated slowly, recrossed the frontier. Invasion was prostrate, for a

while. Danton had won his second triumph, having spurred France to clear French soil of foreign armies, after rousing Paris to clear French government of a dissembling, ill-fated King.

## VI

The Paris deputies for the National Convention were Jacobins, and Danton stood at the head of the poll. The Departments gave a majority over Jacobins to the Girondins, Brissot's successors, and new ministers were mostly Girondins, under Roland. Danton, as a deputy, ought at once to have resigned his seal of office; but he continued to act as a minister, under pressure from his friends, and the woeful situation, and much to Roland's annoyance; and when he did resign, he was elected to the foremost committees, the *Comité de Constitution* and the *Comité Diplomatique*. Struggles intensified between the Girondins, and Jacobins soon named the Mountain, since they occupied the higher benches, watched by a vacillating, nervous Centre, known as the Plain; and Danton redoubled his effort to achieve unity and to ensure national defence, appealing to the Girondins, looking to his old Cordeliers and Jacobin friends, several of whom were to become his implacable enemies; nor could he suppress his temper on all occasions of insult and accusation from Rolandists, meanwhile trying to hold the Commune. He sounded a new note at the opening of the Convention and bewildered his opponents and alarmed supporters with his alternately stark and emotional rhetoric; for almost his first words were meant to reassure law-abiding citizens and those who feared the demands of extravagant communists and possible agrarian laws. He proclaimed the dogma of property-rights. Let the Convention abjure exaggeration, he said; let them declare that all property would

be for ever safeguarded. He had loosed the Fourth Estate and seemed about to ally himself to the Third, speaking for moderation after gaining power by insurrection; but Danton was a realist, had measured the evils of mob-law, or no law, aware that frenzied democracy led to romantic political adventures, imperilled responsible government and might ruin a nation.

The Convention, at its second meeting, September 22, declared a Republic. They reached their consummate decision quietly, almost furtively, many of them no doubt afraid of royalism in the Departments; and there had been reticence even among Jacobins, a suggestion that the Club should name itself *Amis de la République* having been negated on the ground that such a change might prejudice the constitutional operations of the Convention. The death-rattle of monarchy in France had wondrously prolonged itself. Now, however, all public acts must date as from Year One of the Republic; and there were no further reticences, no equivocations in the cry "*Vive la République*" from Jacobins and patriots. Danton moved that the Republic be one and indivisible, firm in his idea of a homogeneous France and a central government; and Paris stood for the political heart of France. The theory of Federal States was anathema to him, and to the Montagnards; not so to a few of the Girondins.

Presently he urged a more tolerant attitude to the clergy, on pragmatic rather than on religious grounds, foreseeing the Vendée rising and in search of compromise to avoid civil war; and he hoped to save Louis, again showing statesmanship, certain the King's death would extend and deepen hatred of France abroad. He went on mission for six weeks to the Belgian army; and he came back to vote for Louis' death, that too by reason of "political necessity," much having occurred in France, and in himself.

On November 19, the Convention had decreed in the name of France that it would grant fraternity and aid to all peoples desirous of being free, and it charged the executive to give army generals the orders needful to help such peoples and to defend citizens who had been or might be molested in the course of liberty. And so the men of the Convention threatened the Kings and governments of Europe. On December 15, they agreed in effect that the peoples who wanted fraternity and aid from France must accept the revolutionary dictatorship of France as a condition for such help; that all existing authorities in the countries involved must be destroyed, their properties being used as a reserve to guarantee French *assignats* imposed as legal tender. Nations would be forced to freedom and must pay; and woe to any people who should attempt to free itself in a manner unsuitable to France. The past had reared itself and taken command of the present, wherefore liberation-wars became wars of conquest.

Danton, on his return from Belgium, had found his wife grievously ill; and this fact, together with the impossibility of smoothing quarrels and uniting Girondins and Jacobins; and the asperity of attacks on himself and his policy of conciliation at home and elsewhere, deranged his patience and much of his statesmanship, at length kindled rage in him. Men were asking if a Convention-majority would be enough to justify the execution of Louis. Danton told them brutally that they had made a Republic by a mere majority, had changed the whole history of the nation by a mere majority; and now they thought the life of one man too great for a mere majority! A vote could not be decisive enough to make blood flow? Well, he had seen blood flow decisively enough at the frontier! By the end of January, he too was in the evil grip of tradition and a proud imperialism, governed by that old spirit of France hitherto apparently exorcised by



the new France in the name of humanity and reason. He demanded the annexation of Belgium, the Rhine, "natural frontiers," lusting for conquest like an ancient French King. The limits of the French Republic, the Rhine, the Atlantic, the Pyrenees, the Alps, were marked by nature, he said, and no force on earth would be able to prevent France from attaining them. The next day he went off to the armies again; and the new French policy brought England, Holland and Spain to the aid of Prussia and Austria in the conflict with a now thoroughly dangerous and most arrogant Republic.

Dumouriez and his troops overran Belgium and entered Holland, Custine with his troops occupied the banks of the Rhine, Savoy and Nice were in French hands; and the peoples of these countries discovered in process of time that freedom, among other things, meant pillage, and indemnities to fill French war-chests. Victory mania led to defeat, France lost the Netherlands in the spring, her armies retreated, and she saw herself about to be invaded anew. Danton had hurried to Paris early in February, 1793, after acquiring a sinister reputation, and maybe plunder for himself, on this second visit to Belgium, he too having been fouled by the prevalent conquest lunacy. He found his house closed, his children gone, his wife dead and buried. The patriot who had impelled his fellows to defy Europe shrank to a man bereaved and in agony; for he had loved his wife profoundly and always, retiring to his hearth after national work day by day, giving himself in exuberant joy to his family; a realist and an opportunist as a statesman, an incorrigible romantic in his affections and emotions, an uxorious husband. The natural force emanating from him in hours of political crisis turned inward and became a delirium of grief feeding on itself. He would and must see his wife and embrace her once more. He sped to her grave, tore the lid from the coffin, held

to all that remained of her. Then he turned away, numb in mind and senses, calm now. Robespierre wrote to him that if the certitude of having a tender and devoted friend who loved him to the death could solace him, let Danton know that Robespierre was his; they would sorrow together. In little more than a year, Robespierre would have his part in sending that friend to the guillotine.

Danton shunned duty for a while, and hid pain and remorse from sight; and when he reappeared, misery served as whip to a renewed energy. He spoke often at the Convention, scared the people by his pictures of national defeats, roared at his critics and the enemies of the country, shouted for new struggles in face of new perils. The temper of Frenchmen, he said, needed danger to quicken resistance. Paris yet again must give the impulse to ensure triumphs. He sought help from the Girondins; and they in their jealousy and mistrust and a spiritual pride repelled him, thrust him toward Jacobins and a Commune now re-established and enlarged and more excessive in demand, ignoring the want of a genius in diplomacy and nearly ripe to accuse Danton of collusion with enemies. The miscreance of arch-democrats had taken fuel when Dumouriez, Danton's friend, unable to make way in *his* artfully concealed policy of dictatorship, went over to the enemy after defeat and the collapse of his ambitious schemes in Belgium, Danton having been sent to report on the situation, to "cure or garrotte Dumouriez," as he said. Dumouriez's treachery involved the Gironde, unjustly, weakened their already stricken character as a ministry; and they were impotent to deal firmly with any situation. Yet they refused to ally themselves with Danton, heaped abuse on him, lashed him, and he had to get the strength requisite for himself and for France in a contemptuous disregard of ministries, fashioning new executive weapons, France being now in a condition of siege.

Civil war had begun in the Vendée, food-riots were recurring in Paris, French armies tottering in face of a leagued Europe; sedition thrived among priests and royalists; and Danton meant to have arbitrary powers with which to strangle enemies and brave disaster.

He had help from the Montagnards, and the Commune, and his own great skill in persuading waverers, men of the Plain, and forced a motion, creating the Revolutionary Tribunal; and so he gave Paris a bludgeon in an hour of need. Then, following the grim logic, he was responsible for the first *Comité de Salut public*, a body able to use that bludgeon, though the proposal came from others. The new Committee could discuss in secret and override ministers, preparing Country-in-danger measures; and soon it was known as the Danton Committee, its purpose in his phrase being to vanquish foes, to restore order and make a new Constitution. The Girondins had finally lost even the semblance of power, though they were yet vocal, and restless.

By and by he forsook his theories of an armed propaganda now become impractical, and natural frontiers, recovering his political wisdom; for he saw that France might be dismembered after invasion if she did not seek by a lucid and sagacious diplomacy to attain peace by negotiation; and there could be no peace, no negotiation, while the November and December decrees controlled French policy. He realised that conquest-war would exhaust and ruin the land and must end in military dictatorship and a restoration of monarchy; and he was prophetic. Peace had become imperative if the Republic were to survive, if a civil liberty for all men, the promotion and extension of industry and commerce, the end of strife and the beginning of happiness were to be realities. Robespierre wanted a death penalty against anyone who would be cowardly enough to have transactions with the enemy. Danton parried that thrust by defining enemies as

those who refused to admit the sovereignty of the French people. The November decree, he said, was singularly vague, and engaged France to help patriots who wished to make a revolution, say in China. Let the Republic stabilise itself and, by its wisdom and energy, it would attract all peoples. Let the Convention decree never in any way to meddle with the affairs of other governments. . . .

Had he gained full mastery, and piloted France during the next twelve months, over twenty years of war might have been spared to Europe; but Robespierre and his fellows had that mastery, for a time, and they stood rigidly for armed propaganda, natural frontiers, conquest, a universal Republic nursed by France; and Danton's clairvoyance was ignored, his policy decried. As chief of the first *Comité de Salut public* he sent his instructed agents broadcast, in more or less earnest and hopeful negotiation with England, Holland, Spain, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Turkey, and the neutral powers; and opponents of the Left accused him of fearfulness and perfidy and other things, and named his Committee a *Comité de la Perte publique*; of public ruin.

Robespierre and his Jacobins, as envious and resentful as the Girondins, pursued their campaign against Danton and his ascribed moderatism and ambitions as a dictator, undermining him with the Commune. He had worn himself to the quick during the last tempestuous year, and in nervous exhaustion and a temporary indifference harmful to any man at that hour, and foolish, even criminal, in a statesman, he ceased to resist opponents. He had left the Girondins to their fate, having exceeded patience and forbearance in his long strain to placate them; and he allowed himself to be ousted from the *Comité de Salut public*. These reactions were temperamental in him, and led to his downfall. The new Committee, thoroughly Jacobin and about to include Robespierre, made

prompt end to the diplomatic schemes of Danton, challenged Europe, scorning negotiations, and took immense risks, not yet trained to its astounding resource, though full of daring; and but for the dissensions and muddle in the foreign camps, France might have succumbed. Danton, keenly alive to those risks, came to the help of Robespierre, aware that the general situation now called for yet more stringent emergency measures; for a central and dictatorial power able to co-ordinate and to control all things, and vested in the *Comité de Salut public*; for the establishment of an unconstitutional, a revolutionary government, until the peace. Though his suggestions were not immediately adopted, they became law in time; and he had much to do with the formation of a revolutionary-army unit for harsh, supervisory work. He would not consent to serve on the strengthened Committee, though a revived popularity had carried him to the Presidency of the Convention; and thereafter the Terror began to take final shape.

Actually the man Danton had displaced the statesman; the romantic lover had swamped the democratic warrior. He had said that "*enfin il lui faut des femmes*," he must have women, meaning a wife; evidently the truth of it; for he was a product of earth with only fugitive visions of what in contrast might be named heaven, and his passions obscured his political mentality. He said he was "*saoul des hommes*," quite sick of men; that there were more than enough irreparable miseries in revolutions without the addition of tormenting personal hatreds between patriots; and he turned from them to the arms of a pious young woman, friend of his first wife in whom he saw an impersonation of his former lover. Four months after bereavement he married again, went to find serenity and rest in the country; and when he returned to Paris he was too late; for in his self-assurance he misjudged the craft and dark resolution of men unfriendly to him, fancying

he could regain authority when he had freed himself from a physical and spiritual lassitude.

He had already embroiled himself by protecting suspects from revolutionary justice; and in his present anger at slaughter, and his own foremost part in devising the machinery of a Terror now in his opinion used wantonly, he told his familiar Desmoulins to call for mercy: hence *le Vieux Cordelier*. Robespierre and his intimates were not ready to apply a brake to the revolutionary chariot, and used caution, bringing such prey as a Danton to death. They advanced by stages, aiming at his acquaintance before crushing him, more wary than he. Weeks passed; and on the eve of his arrest his friends begged him to leave France and seek cover abroad. He said that a man could not carry his country on the soles of his boots. Foes would not dare to arrest him, Danton! His head was firm on his shoulders, and who could wish to have it off! what good would that do anyone? Besides, if he must choose, he preferred to be guillotined rather than to guillotine. He was weary of bloodshed.

Robespierre thought that either he or Danton must triumph, since they could not both survive if France were to be saved. He provided Saint-Just with material for charges against his old colleague: Danton had preached Mercy, inspiring Desmoulins; Danton had intrigued for the ruin of France with foreign Courts and ruffians at home; Danton meant to re-establish monarchy and destroy republican government. . . . Danton must die. The Convention suffered from a paralysis of fear in the atmosphere of terror, and there was only one serious protest that Danton should himself be heard before impeachment; a protest followed by an abject retraction when Robespierre said they would see if the Convention knew how to break an idol long since rotted.

Danton and his group had been arrested on the

last night of March, 1794, some hours before the reading of Saint-Just's report at the Convention.

## VII

The trial lasted four days. Judges and jurymen were selected with much care, their imposed duty being to convict rather than to judge; and Danton and his friends, accused of fomenting conspiracy for the re-establishment of monarchy and the destruction of national representation and republican government, were grouped with fraudulent speculators and spies; fourteen in all at the opening, thus an attempt to stigmatise and dishonour the political victims at the outset, a separation of prisoners having been forbidden. Crowds excited to see and hear a Danton at bay filled the court and the street and extended across a bridge to the far side of the river. Days were sultry, windows open, and most of the folk did hear Danton as he shouted and scolded.

The first day went in formal questions, and enquiry into financial corruption partly true. Yes, he was Danton! known among revolutionaries and soon to be annihilated; but they would find his name in the Pantheon. The indictment was based on Saint-Just's report: vague, extravagant, much of it unproven; and Danton, on the second day, used the occasion as if it were a public meeting, addressing the populace obliquely. He pointed to a witness, Cambon, an old colleague. Come now! did Cambon think they were conspirators? Look! he said, Cambon laughed; Cambon believed nothing of the sort! Danton also laughed, and told the jury to make a note of Cambon's grin. He was questioned by the President, turned on him, left hand to hip, right hand sweeping air, his voice beginning to rise and throb. To the charge of venality he said that men such as he were beyond price. He gave an elaborate account of his revolutionary

career. That was his defence. He had served in his own fashion and would embrace his worst enemy for the sake of the country; would give himself if his country needed sacrifice. . . . The crowd began to applaud, once more under the spell of the man who had evoked August 10, responsive to his great voice and the tale of his deeds, they too laughing at a charge of conspiracy. The President hammered at his bell, tried to quiet the fellow, and said a prisoner must defend himself with proofs, not with rhetoric. Danton bellowed his answer: a man had the right to be vehement for the public good; such violence had been his; if he outroared himself now, that was because he had been accused with such abominable injustice. Notes passed between the President and the Public Prosecutor; something must be done to interfere, otherwise the elated crowd might take a lead and arraign the Tribunal. They were saved when Danton exhausted himself and had to pause. Meanwhile, the *Comité de Salut public* had been uneasy, and momentarily thought of arresting President and Prosecutor for weakness.

On the third day the prisoners demanded that witnesses be called, national representatives consulted; whereupon the Prosecutor said this must cease, trial having become mere noise and public scandal. He wrote to his masters for leave to make end: prisoners wanted to call deputies, appealed to the people, refused to be silent, and so on. Saint-Just, with the Prosecutor's note, stood at the Convention, affirming that prisoners were in open revolt, proof of guilt, therefore the Convention must take prompt measures. He spoke of Desmoulin's wife and her friend Dillon, of plots to usurp the Convention. He flattered and cajoled the deputies and had his decree whereby malefactors who might dare to interrupt the course of justice could be outlawed. Instructions were sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal.



On the last day the Court met at an early hour. The Prosecutor said he had numerous witnesses, but he must conform to the orders of the Convention: the accused would be judged by unspoken proofs. Danton had been promised all freedom in concluding his defence. He was foiled. He began to shout again, pounding the court. Debates closed! how could that be? They had not yet properly started! No evidence read! No witnesses! . . . There was scuffle and din before the prisoners were finally hurried from sight. The jury retired to deliberate; and at least one member had stirrings of conscience and hesitated to pronounce guilt after such an unrighteous procedure. A second pleaded that here was indispensable sacrifice and not trial; for could Danton and Robespierre exist together! could the Republic dispense with Robespierre? Members of the *Comité de Sûreté générale*, auxiliary to the giant Committee, were alarmed at delay, spoke coercively to jurymen and forced a verdict. The court would not risk having the prisoners up for sentence. Danton and his friends heard they were guilty, and must die.

He behaved not unlike Shakespeare's Barnardine in the cells, railing jocosely at execution, careless, reckless, cynical, obscene, no more apprehensive of death than of a drunken sleep. Then he remembered the Revolutionary Tribunal was due to him, and he needed pardon from gods and men for that human scourge, though he had intended only to prevent a renewal of September Massacres; and now he left all things in frightful confusion and with no man who knew how to govern. Authority in revolutions, he said, usually fell to the scoundrels: much better live as a humble fisherman than as a governor of men. He had loved life passionately, infused with the will to live as few men of his time, of any time; he had loved greatly, and left a young wife to mourn for him; his imagination could take fire from spark, create new

worlds and figure the crack of his world; and probably, as he lay alone in a stillness, the night before sentence, he heard the quick hiss of the knife about to slice head from shoulders, ending him and hope and aim. . . . When the tumbrils arrived he was full of good courage and a tragic gaiety, having an affectionate warm glance on Desmoulins, trying to beguile the poor fellow and to prop his manhood as they went to slaughter.

They set out toward the evening of a calm and redolent April day, escorted by troops with drawn swords, lumbering between mute crowds. The priest who had married Danton to his pious, devoted wife, and who supposed he had influence on Danton through her, trudged behind the procession, muttering words of absolution; and perhaps Danton had comforted his wife and that priest in his love for her recently. He was utterly himself at the last hour, the natural man facing death; no pious subterfuge in him, nothing but instincts rooted in earth and regardless of heavenly fictions.

When the tumbrils reached the guillotine, the executioner, hurrying to be done before sunset, report said, intervened as Danton made steps to embrace his friends. And Danton called him an imbecile: would he prevent their heads from kissing in the basket! Danton was the last to mount, having seen his friends die. He paddled through their blood to the knife. Now, report continued, his huge frame was seen to quiver. He murmured something about his wife. He may have been wrenched on a sudden by the irony and agony of annihilation. An instant after he braced himself, said loudly: "*Allons Danton, pas de faiblesse!*" Then his wit and healthy arrogance flashed yet again as he told executioner Sanson to show the severed head to the people, for it was worth the trouble. Within a few seconds that pocked face and the massive rough head fell into the basket and jostled with others.

He died in his thirty-fifth year, doomed by the Revolutionary Tribunal and the *Comité de Salut public*,

two instruments forged by himself, turned on him now and by the force he had given to them. His name, as he had declared at his mock trial, stamped all revolutionary institutions, armies, committees; and he might be said to have devised his own death in the effort to save France and bring equality and fraternity to his countrymen.

## VIII

Danton was one of the few prominent men of his time who did not suffer a gangrenous excess of egoism, and though he had his pride he escaped the sickness of vanity: let his name wither rather than that France should not be free, he said. He, like Franklin, might have written that unhappily for humanity the great efforts, the wars and revolutions, were carried on and effected by parties in bondage to their own interests or what they took to be such; that while a party upheld a general design, each man had a particular and private interest to serve, thwarting other interests, dividing parties, adding to the confusion, the different views of opposing parties occasioning all the muddle of the world. It could be said of him, as of Richelieu, that his designs were positive, his views clear, simple, penetrating, his superiority a gift to measure facts and to conform to them, proposing what should be opportune, seldom attempting the impossible or building without solid foundation; and his diplomatic work, much of it subterraneous, denounced by intransigent Montagnards, proved masterly in the sequel, years after his death. His virtues were clearly manifest, also his vices; yet there was something close hidden, enigmatic, mysterious in the man, expressed by an intensity of feeling, a vividness of phrase, sudden outbreaks followed almost invariably by quick reactions, hatred and anger being explosive in him, never prolonged, never retrospective. At a time when he laboured hard to soothe the censorious, injured Girondins, he left Paris at

midnight to attend a secret meeting arranged by him; and Gaudet, malevolent, inflexible, strong among men of the Gironde, would hear nothing of alliance. Danton left him, finally and sorrowfully aware of hopeless breach, and said that Gaudet could not understand and did not know how to forgive. Energy, he repeated, founds Republics; wisdom and conciliation makes them immortal. Harsh, stubborn insistence on past wrongs, real and fanciful affronts, and a wilful acrimony, seemed unintelligible, stupid, most wicked to Danton; and crassly impolitic between those who wished to govern. He was free from malice, usually prone to make the most of life and good cheer, as impetuous in his affections as in his philippics, decrying the misery of struggle, the poison of jealousies and envies, the cruelty of injustice; and he yearned to make life tolerable for all and joyous to those who were faithful to humanity.

He was a champion of the Fourth Estate, and called for moderation when factions were ruthless; and he tried to save Barnave, the King, the Queen, Girondins, this man and that, after attacking them as traitors to France and to democracy. His characteristic magnanimity, his uncritical loyalty to friends and acquaintance less honourable and more peccable than himself in and out of office, compromised him banefully and provoked his fall. That he was careless of money, and venal, was nearly certain; that he would not risk himself, above all his policy, and stop massacre was probable; that he caught war fever and aimed for a time at conquest and annexations could not be denied; but always when the impulse had expended itself he recoiled from extravagance, hasting to repair evil, or to forget it. He would not give way to remorse nor to wholesome or morbid introspection. He thought men in effect might act knavishly, but as a rule they were more foolish than criminal; and his own numerous sins of commission and omission trailed after him, so many follies seldom bemoaned.

Had there been no Revolution he might have passed through life as the excellent Monsieur d'Anton, a capable lawyer and a boisterous good fellow, never squeamish, placable if not mild, loving his hearth and village and rural property, a man of earth and with the fullness of earth in him; but his homely will to live became a revolutionary will to power, using him as if he were so much indispensable life-force and not only a man born to suffer and joy and die among millions; indeed, possession appeared as something demoniac in Danton at moments of national crises; and he could pluck a lid from a coffin, violent to get at his mate, howling at death like an animal. The demon now and again polarised in thought and feeling, rang in speeches never written, always spontaneous, often dramatic and occasionally and grossly melodramatic, though rarely flawed by artifice; and his similes and metaphors were drawn from everyday affairs, from nature, and he spoke of fire, thunder, rivers and the sea, woods, fields, rocks, mountains, large in his gestures and with the voice of a Stentor. Power sped from him, uplifted men, charging them too with earth-force. Then Danton would become his humdrum gay self and could laugh, heedless of Kings, policies, governments; and he wanted his mate, ran from duty to his fields, indifferent to enemies; and he lived like a patriarch until again he must away to stir men. The craving for rural quiet honoured him as a man; his political lapses disgraced him as a statesman, and helped to ruin him, for his opponents were cunning.

Danton, seen across a century, therefore appeared often at once as simple and as puzzling as all natural phenomena; frequently noble, sometimes ignoble, now and again vulgar, lewd, and men could soundly whip his virtues with his faults; yet he refused to torment or to bewilder himself, confronting riddles, ingenuous in his chosen life; and his genius had root in character, in a power to will and a will to act.

CHAPTER III  
THE NATIONAL CONVENTION; AND LOUIS'  
EXECUTION

THE Legislative Assembly accepted dictation from the Insurrectionary Commune, summoned a National Convention, abrogating itself; and the elections took place under the menace of September massacres. Though the Jacobins were vigorous enough to suppress journalists unfavourable to themselves and to disfranchise voters who had signed reactionary petitions, their victory at the polls did not extend beyond Paris, in spite of hundreds of affiliated provincial Clubs. The Montagnards relied on Jacobin Paris, insisting that the capital had made the Revolution and must control it; some of the Girondins abhorred Paris, a centre of blood and lies, Madame Roland said, and they looked to the Departments for encouragement. A revolution neurosis troubled most of the overdriven politicians at this time, stimulating dissensions between the men who had made the insurrection of August and those who had been unable to prevent it. The Montagnards voiced the protests, echoing the demands, of a Fourth Estate flayed by war-monopolists and profiteers; the Girondins, and men of the incoherent Plain, stood for property-owners, trading interests, private enterprise, refusing to compound when disasters overtook French armies and only a relentless and despotic government could expect to weld the land into a state of due resistance. Men like Danton knew that war and its brutality and homicidal madness routed civil liberties, and while lamenting the facts they had to make submission; others less moderate rejoiced in war. The Girondins, on the contrary, having started war, could not submit to facts, romantically firm in a political

idealism, resenting military exactions, courts martial, *Salut public* tyrannies, domiciliary visits, and most of the gear levelled at human dignity and decency.

The overthrow of the Crown, and invasion by foreign armies, set problems for immediate solution; and in the steady and general drift toward the Left under a spur of war conditions, the Gironde, the Left of the previous Assembly, found itself Right; and future movements were to diminish the weight of Right and Left alike, giving supremacy to Jacobin Committee government. Conflict between Gironde and Mountain, the Departments and Paris, took ominous colour when one of the Right announced peril if a city governed by rebels should control the French Empire as Rome had controlled the Roman Empire. Paris, he added, must be confined to her eighty-third share of influence, having a place only as other Departments; and he denounced the Left and all who had threatened members of the Legislative Assembly and would steal power by anarchy. The Montagnards took up the challenge; and they had discipline, force, unity of design, whereas the Girondins had neither lucid aims nor cohesion. The Convention became an arena, with the middle-class, professional men of the Plain inclined at first to take a lead from moderates, not yet thoroughly scared by the military and economic tangle or certain that only pitiless men could hope to battle with it. The untimely abstractions and political vacillations of the Gironde were exposed in the long and acrid debates on the King's fate; for hitherto, while not able to pass their measures by force, they had been strong enough to resist the Left, and now, though republicans and assured of Louis' guilt, they wanted to save him from impeachment and death, in opposition to Jacobins. Their lack of homogeneity as a coalition, their doubts and indecisions, led to their fall. The Montagnards knew that by flinging the King's uncrowned head at Europe as a

gage, they must raise extreme issues, could divide opponents, and would have chance for extreme measures, shattering retreat-bridges and convincing the world that France meant to die or to live untrammelled by royal chains and monarchy-plots.

There were demands for Louis' instant death: he had been condemned on August 10 by the people, and must die because France must live, execution being a political necessity and not a matter to be decided by the tedious formality of a trial. The Girondins appointed a commission to examine evidence and to decide on procedure. Reports were heard early in November, debates accelerated when Roland came with a huge bundle of papers found in an iron safe belonging to the King at the Tuileries; proof of his correspondence with Mirabeau, Dumouriez, La Fayette, Talleyrand and others; of his deceit and corruption. Deputies were named to study the documents from the safe; a committee soon enlarged for the purpose of drafting an indictment, trial being now inevitable. Girondins already accused of Court sympathies dare not increase distrust by refusing to vote orally and in public on Louis' affairs; but they tried anew to equivocate and delay, confusing the issue; and they were defeated. In December, the spokesman of the examination committee reported to the Convention and gave a full tale of the Revolution, emphasising Louis' reactionary behaviour and evidence of duplicity and guilt. The next day the King stood before his judges, sure that proceedings were illegal and monarchy was inviolable, that by the Constitution of 1791 he could not be held responsible for the doings of his executive. He was questioned by the President, and dodged in his answers, pleading a lapse of memory, irresponsibility. When documents bearing his signature were shown to him he refused to admit their validity, professing ignorance of the iron safe; and he said he had never given money to Mirabeau nor to any deputy. On the return to his



prison, the Temple, he confessed he had been unready for so many questions and had denied his own hand.

The Girondins, having no sympathy with Louis, yet manœuvred to avert or to adjourn trial, afraid of strengthening the coalition against France, and they proposed the banishment of all Bourbons in perpetuity; failed again. In the last week of December Louis appeared once more at the Convention. Advocates were allowed to him, and they held that the trial was exceptional, not just: Louis could not take responsibility, being inviolable. They had no serviceable evidence; and though all the proofs of his relations with enemy powers were not then available, men of the Convention and the people of France knew their King had in fact brought invading armies into the land and meant to forswear himself. The Girondins proposed a referendum, alleging that the King had been made inviolable by the Constitution and only the people could deprive him of his rights; others repeated that execution would enrage the monarchs of Europe and shock the peoples recently and forcibly united to France.

Attempts outside the Convention were made to save Louis. Men of the army were for mercy; the general Custine had offered to protect Louis if Prussia would acknowledge the Republic; and Dumouriez also had his part, though afterward he called Louis a perfidious scoundrel. English Whigs in communication with deputies begged Pitt to intervene; the Spanish Bourbons offered to take Louis and keep him out of politics, giving hostage for his good conduct, and they instructed their agents to buy votes in the Convention. England said she would preserve the peace if France relinquished her conquests, and she did not mention the King; for Pitt looked to Louis' death as a means of stirring anger against France and of silencing irksome Whigs. Nothing availed; and the notion of an appeal to the electors suffered again when a deputy said that the trial was an act of public safety, a measure

of general security; and an act of public safety could not be submitted to the people for ratification. The Jacobins were yet democrats, but they would not risk their hopes by doubtful referendums.

Voting began in the middle of January. Three questions were to be determined: was Louis guilty; if so, what punishment; and should there be an appeal to the people? Proceedings were lengthy, governed by roll-call, and each deputy had opportunity to give reasons for his vote, Jacobins having insisted on this method, assuming that if Girondins pronounced for death, they would associate themselves with extremists, and if not they could be charged with monarchist reaction. There were a few abstentions on the first question, otherwise unanimity; thus no doubts as to whether the King was guilty of conspiring against public safety and of attempting the general safety of the State. The motion to leave punishment to decision from the people collapsed; and it helped to destroy the Girondins when their turn came for arraignment. Voting on the penalty took thirty-seven consecutive hours, votes being given for detention, for imprisonment in chains, for death and a postponement of execution, for death conditionally; and three hundred and sixty-one, a majority of one, for prompt death. The Girondins now pressed for a direct vote on a respite, in view of the external situation, and were defeated anew. The Convention decreed that the nation should take charge of the royal family. The Girondins, foiled in their ambiguous schemes to protect Louis, retorted by urging a decree to prosecute the September murderers, and passed their motion with aid from the Plain; but the next day a deputy was assassinated by an unfortunate wild fellow once a member of the King's bodyguard; and under the influence of that outrage the Girondin decree lapsed; nor was there further overt act by royalists, despite much rumour.

## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Louis expected to be saved from death, and had spoken of finding a retreat abroad. When he heard there could be no hope for him he broke out passionately: "They would never dare!" He soon resigned himself, spent hours with his confessor, preparing to die like a good and faithful christian, brave, almost serene. He slept quietly, having ordered that he should be awakened at five on the morning of his last day, January 21, 1793. He sent a ring to the Queen, took sacrament, arranged papers and his will. At nine o'clock he was told to come. He wanted to retire for a few moments; and, when urged impatiently, he said he was ready.

All Paris crowded to see Louis Capet die. Massed troops and cannon lined the route, points of approach were guarded, each neighbouring street and alley having its patrol. The people were silent as the King passed. He loitered at the foot of the guillotine, then mounted firmly, clad in his puce coat and grey breeches and white stockings. He helped Sanson to remove the coat, and resisted when his hands were about to be roped. A whisper from his loyal confessor soothed him. He strode to the edge of the scaffold and confronted a staring crowd, and troops, bayonets, cannon. His pallid drawn face suddenly flushed. He wanted to declare his innocence. The officer in command of the National Guard gave sign, and a roll of drums smothered Louis' voice. Now, presumably, there was some hesitation on the part of the executioner and his assistants. The commander spoke to them. They seized Louis. He fought as they bound him to the plank. His confessor stooped to him. Louis' agonised last cry ended abruptly as the knife struck his neck. Sanson grasped the head. Now the tense silence of the crowd broke: "*Vive la République!*" Hats were waved, arms flourished, pikes and handkerchiefs dipped in the King's blood, as if a drop were a benediction; and, report said, Sanson trimmed the dripping head

and did trade, selling locks of hair, fragments of the puce coat. Troops marched from the scene, the crowd dispersed slowly. By mid-day newsvendors were shouting and running in the streets, peddlers selling their wares, and folk thronged the cafés, and at night, exchanging congratulation, drinking to themselves and the nation; as if France had been at last rid of peril and all must now be well, a Kingless people happy and free, armies successful, traitors confounded. The spell of centuries had been dissolved; a King was mortal; he could be obliterated like any common malefactor! And why, men asked, should a King's head make more noise than other heads when it fell?

Louis had believed in his own innocence on that January morning. The crowning tragedy, Acton wrote, was not that which Paris witnessed when the officer commanded the drums to beat and silenced speech, but the fact that Louis met his fate with such inward complacency, blind to the opportunities he had wasted and the misery he had caused, and that he died a penitent christian, yet an unrepentant King. Often he had forsworn himself, and he and no doubt his confessors argued that oaths imposed on a King were as valueless morally as Louis intended they should be politically; indeed he regarded the revolutionaries as the orthodox in the past had regarded heretics, admitting no obligation to be honourable or to keep faith with them; much worse, again and again he had hoaxed and imperilled his own friends and those who aspired to direct and save him: Mirabeau, Talleyrand, La Fayette, Barnave and others. He personified the tradition of Kings and Divine Right, and consequently there was no reliable veracity in him touching matters of State; nor could he be other than a despot in spirit, though benign, courageous, an amiable mediocrity, an earnest good Catholic, an inveterate glutton, and a chaste husband; and the Comte de Provence, comparing the slipperiness of his brother to greasy billiard-

balls, said Louis' debilities and indecision were past all estimate.

His execution was an act of civil war; yet that death, though a logical result of his kingly woes and improbity, since the people had loved him at the beginning of the Revolution and had aimed to be loyal, was a cruelty, as most war measures; for he might have gone into banishment and enjoyed his food and hunting and ironmongery, less harmful to his country as a private gentleman alive and away than as a headless sovereign. His death proved to be a formidable and resounding political blunder, as the Girondins, and Danton, had foreseen, and it incited the ephemeral sympathy and the dramatic indignation of Kings who had despised him in a selfish need to belittle him, though Europe was historically familiar with murdered Kings and Queens and the agelong excuse, *raison d'état*; and many Frenchmen who had been alarmed by their King, gradually learning to hate him, now pitied him and turned in wrath or dismay from the Revolution, looking for succour elsewhere.

The Convention had decreed the end of Louis XVI as an irrevocable act essential to public safety. The consequence nearly destroyed France, serving to extend and amplify civil and religious war at home, and in measure to unite the powers of Europe against the Republic, as if France were another Poland now quite ripe for spoliation and partition.



ST JUST



## CHAPTER IV

### SAINT-JUST ; AND THE REPRESENTATIVES ON MISSION

#### I

SOON after the opening of the National Convention, a blond, frail man of twenty-five, jaundiced in complexion yet not unhandsome, his expression high, disdainful, rose and astonished fellow-deputies busy discussing the fate of the King; for that obscure, stern fellow with the large head, prominent straight nose and eyebrows, masterful chin and peering keen glance, said in his grave assurance that Louis was an enemy and not a defendant, having fought his people and suffered defeat; therefore a barbarian, foreign prisoner of war; a murderer. What foe had done more harm to France, he asked. Thus Saint-Just in a speech characteristic of him at that hour, and after; inexorable, lucid, epigrammatic; the man who would tell his friend and elder, Robespierre, to be calm, since empire fell to the phlegmatic. Yet there were hot passions in him. He was extravagantly named a panther, a tiger, the personification of terror; and the St John of the people's Messiah. He had his gospel, a belief that no one could represent the people if not directly elected so to do by an unqualified suffrage; national sovereignty lay with the Commons; a strong and punitive executive would turn the national mind toward justice, make the people happy, prevent tyranny, revolutions having to advance from weakness to courage, crime to virtue; a revolutionary government did not signify war and conquest, but the transition from evil to good, corruption to probity. The few known facts of this evangelist's youth stigmatised him at the outset,



enhancing and darkening the puzzle, if in truth the child sired the man.

The elder Saint-Just was past fifty at the time of his son's birth; an old cavalry captain, solemn, gloomy, who at length moved from Decize to Blérancourt, Picardy, tilled his garden and read his books, and died when the lad had reached his eleventh year. Saint-Just's mother, about twenty years junior to her husband, a sensible devout woman, a little indolent, melancholy, and anxious to see her son in the Church, lived in a decent frugality, doing what she could to rear her small brood and control the wayward, headstrong boy. He was schooled at Soissons, precocious in his fancies and his studies, already romantic and ambitious; and solitary, proud, unfriendly, defiant when he thought his privacy and rights were infringed; sullen under rebuke, hostile alike to sympathy and persuasion, something of a young dandy; scholarly in his teens, a rascal at nineteen.

He ran away from home to try his fortune at Paris, heartsick of a sleepy provincial life, and probably harassed by his mother's piety and the design to make a priest of him; and he stole a silver bowl marked with her crest, a silver-gilt cup, cherished family possessions, other valuables of the sort, two pistols inlaid with gold, marketable stripes from his father's old uniform, trinkets, souvenirs; sold them to a Jew in a boulevard café, providing himself with immediate funds for his hopeful raid on the city. His mother wrote to an acquaintance, an officer of the Guard, beseeching him to use his influence with the Lieutenant of Police to recover the stolen property and imprison her son, in order to prevent further robbery and bring him to repentance; therefore Saint-Just's theft in all likelihood was not the first, for she had repute as a patient, affectionate woman, despaired of being able to train him to honourable manhood, and had recourse to authority. Three days after, she received

a letter from a supposed doctor, who professed friendship with her lad, told a fiction of dangerous illness, and a theft to pay for remedies, since the culprit wished to avoid alarming his mother by soliciting money; and the putative doctor wanted additional sums with which to buy anti-hæmorrhage powders. Saint-Just's mother, evidently aware of his mendacity, refused to be deceived in this crude fashion. Intractable, a thief, and a liar, and not yet twenty! so the youth appeared to her; and he spent the next six months in a house of private correction for rebellious children imprisoned by resentful parents, who paid for their upkeep and had the right to order a release when the young sinners had been tamed and might be forgiven.

Saint-Just hoped to turn soldier, like his father, and had tried and failed to enlist in the guards of the Comte d'Artois on his arrival at Paris; and now, shut up, he solaced himself by writing an immature, ribald, occasionally crisp poem *Organt*, aping Voltaire's *La Pucelle*, intending roguishly to dedicate it to the Vatican; and either ironically or with a flash of good sense he prefaced it with the remark: "*J'ai vingt ans; j'ai mal fait; je pourrais faire mieux*": he was twenty, he had done badly; he would do better. His distracted and impoverished mother took pity on him, and he came home, not ungrateful for release, promising amendment, though there were foul dregs in him; and mortified vanities scarred him permanently. He was induced to look to the law for a career, and took preparatory work in a solicitor's office at Soissons. His first biographers said that as a youth he had been as loose in his morals as he was rebellious in temper, playing at gallantry, whoring at pleasure; but though Saint-Just, composing *Organt*, had written despisingly of Man, this vile king of the universe, as he phrased it, he shunned a practical despising of Woman and did not play shameless rake.

He loved the daughter of a wealthy lawyer, and in his passion and his need for cash and advancement at law, thought he would marry her, assuming he must have her father's practice by and by. He brought calamity on her; for she allowed her unyielding parents to wed her to a more reputable suitor, tired of him, remembered her former lover and became his acquiescent mistress. She followed him to Paris in 1793 and, seemingly, was denied by the pugnacious young man famous now and preaching a rigid and revengeful virtue as an indispensable attribute of republicanism; though shortly before his death he changed a lodging Spartan in its bareness for something more pleasant and commodious, incurring debts, because perhaps he meant to keep house with the disgraced and forlorn lady. Unquestionably and indirectly those debts were to his moral credit: he was not prodigal in his affairs at that hour, refused to misappropriate governmental funds, though he might have so enriched himself without trouble or much danger; consequently he at least escaped the opprobrium of venality. He had overcome his thieving instincts, had crushed that low impulse; indeed on his return home from prison he made pact with himself to attain a righteous and impregnable self-mastery; and he persevered to that end, like a Barnave, and in part and at last succeeded. The task proved arduous and slow, an hysteria in him being repressed, not conquered finally; hysteria active when he wrote to Robespierre saying that he recognised an incomparable god in the Jacobin leader, one who could and did uphold the country against torrents of despotism and wickedness, miracles having been wrought. Robespierre kept the letter of his feverous, juvenile disciple among his trophies.

Saint-Just lacerated himself in the years of his nonage, and political ferment, irritable and depressed, hearing of men unknown yesterday, sprung to dazzling fame to-day; and he burned to have his share in

public strife, certain that he had power to mould the destinies of the nation and to govern men, if and when he could govern himself, already indifferent to law-studies, his insatiable glance on summits far above trite professional renown in a tedious and provincial backwater.

## II

He went to the local Clubs, neither fawned nor cringed, and won approval by his revolutionary ardour, though not yet an envenomed Jacobin alternately logical and mystical, devoid of urbanity; and he became an officer in the National Guard and led a group of riotous peasants to a château to brave the owner; who, however, chanced to be away from home. Saint-Just slashed the head of a fern, theatrically, as if it were an offensive noble; and without uttering a word he turned on his heels and marched away with his delighted squad. He made a speech at a reunion of electors, and dealt with words skilfully, naming his youth, for which he claimed indulgence: here among his fellows, he said, he had steeped himself in a liberty precious to all, but younger than himself. Then he had part with the Commune in the elaborate burning of a counter-revolutionary paper. He put his hand in the flames and took oath to suffer death rather than lapse in fidelity to the nation, the law and the King, not having yet decided that Kings must go hence. He used a nervous rhetoric streaked with glaring similes and antitheses, and never lost the trick of dramatic gesture, enforcing a point and, if he could, transfixing his auditors. He posed as a stark realist, succinct and precise; and actually he was as romantic as a La Fayette, and much more dangerous. He corresponded with Desmoulins and Cordeliers at Paris, took his Guards to the city for the great Feast of Federation, gained further prestige locally as an unbending patriot,

and fancied his opportunity had arrived when the elections for the Legislative Assembly began.

In support of his candidature he published a first small political work, *Esprit de la Révolution et de la Constitution de France*, in which shrewd argument on equality, freedom, marriage, divorce, Christianity, priestcraft, jostled with youthful arrogance and flat nonsense, and a sentimentality never quite effaced in his quick development. Throughout his public career he made numerous references to his heart, his withered heart suffering from injustice, and the like, at a time when the hearts of orators were much in evidence; and in his first pamphlet he already used the word Virtue as if he were conspicuous in the hierarchy of Saints as well as foremost in the ranks of political thinkers and humanist philosophers. His growing popularity and his now unmistakable though erratic gifts might have carried him to success at the polls; but he had enemies, and someone, probably the irate sire of his mistress, raised plausible objection, the candidate being not yet twenty-five, therefore ineligible. Saint-Just had to wait about a year before he could pass from political infancy to political manhood.

This check further soured him and he raged at provincial life, incapable of managing his raspy pride. He was eaten by republican fever, he said to a friend, Daubigny, in a letter summarising his moods and hectic fancies: he knew he had the force to come to the front in such an age; Daubigny and his friends were freedmen of glory; they must preach liberty to the Sections, and might the perils of liberty inflame their hearts! Desmoulins must not abandon the Cause, though he lacked the courage of a great-hearted virtue. He, Saint-Just, would be superior to misfortune; he would endure, and speak truth, Truth. Others were cowards, failing to value him adequately. A cheat and a scoundrel was he, because he had no money to give to them! Well, his fame would grow. Let them tear

out his heart and devour it! then and only then could they become great. God! that Brutus should languish neglected, far from Rome! But he had sworn that if Brutus killed no others, he would kill himself. . . . Hysteria yet flared in this obdurate young man sick and, he thought, almost mummified in the provinces, and who could whip himself into a fury of wounded egoism and thwarted ambition.

In September of that year he fled to Paris, elected deputy for the Aisne Department to the Convention, thrilled inwardly, quivering with hope and a sombre vanity, outwardly calm, for he meant to emulate his revered Romans: he would be inflexible, alike against his own emotions and his and the nation's corrupt enemies, prepared to kill and to be killed rather than to show weakness or an unmanly pity, mercy or forbearance, deifying himself as the created hero of his own sulphurous drama, theatrical in the very effort to appear logical, calm, intrepid, self-controlled, his romanticism inverted, poisoning him. He would promote fear of himself in others and not seek to inspire affection, and always in the name of the People, the Nation, Virtue, Happiness, seeing in himself an impeccable avenger of wrong, and a redeemer. He argued that France needed a pure Republic, wherefore the people must have courage enough to be virtuous; and as there were no political virtues without pride, so there could be no pride when a people lived in distress: they must have order, secured only through vigorous good laws and men of a strict integrity. Saint-Just, unlike other Jacobins, would have no traffic with the sly democracy of the Duc d'Orléans. At this hour he had a genuine and a perilous conviction that he was in fact virtuous, a man of destiny; that revolutionary government could only be maintained either by a tyrannical dictator, or an iron-hard system of justice and censorship; that the obligations of State must absorb all private interests.

He was not zealous in attendance at the Jacobins, though his political theory, rhetoric and fanatical daring drew admiration; and he had his turn as President of the Club, already in the van, soon to be President of the Convention. In a speech on the new Constitution awaited by France, he said that all the arts had produced only monsters, because men found pleasure in nature and principles in their pride: now they must consider glory. After the first army victories, glory waned fast and the situation at home and at the frontiers clouded ominously, defeat following defeat. Saint-Just rightly attributed most of the evils to the sterility of a Girondin executive, to treachery among generals, to royalist spies, foreign and clerical intrigues, Vendée risings, stock-jobbery and monopolies. Constitutional government had failed to deal firmly with abnormal conditions and must go for the time being, in order to make way for Jacobin government supported by the Communes; the Sectional and popular Revolutionary Committees, more than forty thousand of them presently, spread over France; the revolutionary-army and the Clubs.

In the prolonged conflict between the National Assemblies with their committees, and the executive, the ministries, power had gradually passed from the executive to the legislature, and was centralised finally in the *Comité de Salut public*, a body at last more despotic than the most absolute of old and absolute monarchies; hence a first principle of the Revolution had been damaged by the Revolution itself, the savagery of war having entangled the aims of political idealists and the hopes of rational democrats. Central power had been a key to French history; and here too the traditions of France overruled the creative impulse of the Revolution, and yet again took forcible charge of the present. The spirit of Louis XIV with his *l'état c'est moi* reappeared in the Committee with its identical though tacit formula. Early committees were so many adumbrations of the definitive Committee, taking ex-

tended power when the national situation was overcast, losing power when a jealous and vigilant Assembly recovered from panic, becoming constitutional again; so until new dangers called for new measures. Legislature and executive first merged after Louis' flight to Varennes; the *Comité Diplomatique* took command of foreign affairs; the *Comité des Recherches* grew into the *Comité de Sûreté générale*, concerned largely with police and the Revolutionary Tribunal, and subordinate with a score of other committees and the eventual twelve Commissions, displacing ministers, to the great central Committee. The *Comité de Défense générale* had made a further advance toward centralisation, proving unwieldy and fractious; and then Danton faced storm, early in 1793, needing reliable weapons, and Isnard proposed a committee of nine members drawn from the Convention and empowered to fulfil the purpose of an executive council and take all measures requisite for the general surety of the nation; and so the *Comité de Salut public*. Necessity and fear drove the Convention to set up a body meeting twice a day, having its secret funds and, at length, a tremendous authority, reporting each week on some of its operations and the state of the Republic. The Convention, afraid of all things arbitrary, established that Committee for a month and only as an emergency measure; and it continued to act for many months, yet as an emergency measure, transformed in character subsequent to Danton's eclipse and the fall of the Girondins, reaching its apogee, now a dictatorship, in late autumn when Danton's various conciliatory methods were adjudged traitorous, and war strangled peace.

Years after, Napoleon said that France had possessed only one veritable and energetic government since 1789, and that the *Comité de Salut public*; and De Maistre named it a miracle of which the spirit even after its demise had strength enough to win battles for France.

Saint-Just became a fearless member of the Com-



mittee, advocating brutal measures, ready to impose them; for thought and action were coeval in him. The army disasters of July 1793, and additional losses the next month, virtually turned the Committee into a Provisional Government. Men had to become soldiers; liberty departed, and fraternity with it; all private and commercial and other interests were prevented from interfering with the new and gigantic war machine; a general maximum fixed the prices of commodities, and there were severe penalties for anyone who did not at once conform. In October, Saint-Just, spokesman for the Committee, and appropriating Danton's ideas, announced the continuation of revolutionary government and the suspension of the Constitution until the end of the war. In the existing circumstances, he said, the Constitution could not stand, for it lacked the vigour to counter all attempts against the nation's freedom. The ministry was only a paper-world. The sword of the law must parade everywhere and rapidly, suppressing crime. All injustice to the people, all acts of treason, all indifference to the nation, all feebleness and hesitation, must be punished. Frenchmen wished happiness to all the people of the earth, but they must now attend exclusively to the well-being of their own land; the Committee saw the French people and only the French people in its glance at Europe. The Revolution must be established, federalism confounded, all conspiracies routed.

He told Robespierre they were dealing solely with obvious crimes, and that was not enough; the crimes of hypocrisy escaped. They must frighten all captious and ill-disposed folk, watch everything, penalise offences great and small in every department of public life, and especially the faults within the government: French government must purify itself. Accordingly, further repressive measures against suspects, and laws endangering everybody; harsh edicts, the spying of neighbour on neighbour, denunciations in the name of

public service. Meanwhile a Revolutionary Tribunal provided the way of quick march to the guillotine.

## III

Deputies had been sent to the Departments at the time of Louis' flight, and after. In March, 1793, about a month before the formation of the initial *Comité de Salut public*, the system was elaborated, chosen men being named *Représentants en mission* and dispatched north and south, east and west. The Committee, under Danton, attached these men to itself and strengthened and enlarged their powers; indeed to call them Proconsuls was perhaps no great exaggeration. Their principal duties were to counteract all attempts at decentralisation and to reduce the entire land to a class dictation from Paris. They had to enforce recruiting, inspect fortresses, arsenals, munition-works, embolden the armies, scrutinise the generals, promoting or deposing officers at will, directing operations; and they cleansed the local and civil administrations, and with help from the Communes and the Clubs, the Revolutionary Committees and popular Societies, did in fact weld France, seriously hampered only in the Vendée and the several towns given to royalist, religious or Girondin uprisings against the Provisional Government.

Saint-Just had preoccupied himself with military affairs for months, believing his gifts equipped him notably for such work, seeing himself born to command, disciplined now, calm at crisis, inexorable; and victories followed in the wake of his tireless activities as a *représentant en mission*, victories attributed to him by his admirers and apologists, though largely due to the unparalleled spirit of the armies, and the genius of Carnot. A representative who succeeded Saint-Just said the fellow tried to do all things, had no real knowledge of military strategy, committed blunders, and disheartened

the best soldiers by his Draconian refusal to consider any penalty but death; not exactly the truth of it, since he used punishments other than death for civilians. Charles Nodier saw him at work, and confessed that his heart beat rapidly and his legs shook under him as Saint-Just stood at ease before a mirror, folding his cravat and issuing orders and sentences.

His first visit to the Rhine occurred late in 1793 when he was sent with Le Bas, a frank and kindly subordinate, a generous good fellow, to restore order in the army and district, matters being deplorable, territory invaded by Austrians. Other representatives were busy thereabouts, but Saint-Just had full powers, despised his colleagues and urged their recall, prone to have his own way, isolating himself, refusing to share direct responsibility; and only the valiant General Hoche could brave the young man and keep military plans secret in his rectitude and wisdom. Hoche was not forgiven, went to prison later, and there remained until the fall of Saint-Just and his group.

Saint-Just began at Strasburg with a proclamation to the Rhine Army, promising mastery; but there were traitors, he said, men indifferent to the cause of the people: he would strike them down, avenging a betrayed army, appointing new leaders. Complaints were to be made within three days by aggrieved soldiers, and by citizens against suspects; and examples of justice and severity hitherto unknown to troops would follow at once. Extraordinary military commissions were established to facilitate new measures. Corrupt administrators and enemy-agents were to be shot in presence of the troops, and with no ceremonious fuss over trial. Anyone could denounce anyone, a mere word often being motive enough for condemnation. High and low officers were executed, or degraded to the ranks, alike for slackness in duty as for treason, failure in military operations having become a mortal crime. Constituted civil and local authorities were

dismissed if they lacked vigour or enthusiasm, aristocrats taxed to supply the people, made to give beds, provisions, boots for the army; properties were confiscated, men fined, imprisoned, deported; no officers were allowed to leave their quarters and visit the town unless on duty, trustworthy Jacobins took the place of arrested municipal authorities, *émigré* agents and suspects were sent to Paris for the guillotine, and the scaffold in Strasburg became a pillory, citizens not prompt enough in obeying orders or supplying goods or money being exposed from six of the morning till the afternoon, jeered at by the crowds of patriots and morally branded though not as a rule otherwise molested. Schools were founded in the towns and villages for a free education and the teaching of French, though German was not suppressed; statues round and about the churches were smashed; and royalists, army-contractors, monopolists and the like came under review each day, unable to appeal, ordinary judicial procedure having been annulled.

Saint-Just, in a report on his administration in the Strasburg district, said that when he began work the army was in despair, having neither provisions nor clothes, discipline nor leadership; the police had failed in the city, the people were outraged by the rich; officers thronged the brothels and theatres, disorderly soldiers overran the streets and lanes. All had been changed. The people had regained their rights, poverty was reduced, the army provisioned, sound now; aristocrats were silent, gold and paper monies at par. . . . Throughout, he and Le Bas had moved to and fro with incredible speed, never at rest, snatching meals and a doze, reorganising all things; and as a result the towns were awed into obedience, armies once more ready for an offensive; and in November he would be able to tell the Committee that the French were victorious along a line from Saarbruck to the banks of the Rhine. The Committee, through Carnot,

the military chief, reminded Saint-Just that his genius must create its own resources and redouble energy, and they expected all they could wish from the sagacity and firmness of his methods; and he answered that the troops were marching here and there, advancing like thunder.

He went back to Paris, soon grew tired of Committee and Convention labour, having now to share authority, not able freely to exercise himself in his chosen part as Avator. He set off again for Strasburg, overcame the incipient revolts about to thrive by the fact of his recent absence, and took measures against the excessive zeal and animality of madmen of his own side, and especially Schneider, the most pompous and notorious of Alsatian terrorists acting as Public Prosecutor to the Revolutionary Tribunal of the Lower Rhine, who, after exposure on the scaffold, of which formerly he had been a perambulatory master, was sent to Paris, and condemned. Saint-Just held to his own strict notion of an elementary justice, and resented what he thought were the pollutions of that justice attributable to infamous creatures ramping in a fury of persecution, and foreigners masquerading as French patriots.

The news that English and Spaniards had been compelled to evacuate Toulon in December, that Vendéans were scattered at Le Mans and at Savenay, roused the Rhine Army to a new and indomitable courage. Saint-Just led a charge at the head of republican squadrons, flung himself into the fighting, prominent with his brilliant scarf and tricolour-plumed hat, insignia of office, regardless of danger, inspiring the men, as bold here as he was remorseless in safety, ready and eager to battle and to die for the Revolution. The French were again masters of the lines of Weissenburg, captured towns, pursuing their gains until the conclusive great victory at Fleurus, a month before the sudden end of Saint-Just and unchecked Committee

government, he meanwhile having journeyed up and down, indefatigable, uneasy, and impatient to be away again when forced to return and house at Paris.

His strenuous labours on mission, his ability and courage in emergency, had raised him high among leaders, and his colleagues sent for him at occasions of crisis, and he spoke for the Committee in the Convention. His artful brusque word helped to the execution of the Girondins, though he had shown moderation, lenient at first with many of the group; he was used to repress the Hébertists and denounce factions who schemed to destroy republican government and starve Paris, as he said; and he took instruction from Robespierre and provoked the slaughter of the Dantonists; as necessary to his friends in the city with his comminatory stark rhetoric as with his audacious and usually effective violence on the frontiers. And he announced the new revolutionary programme, an apologist for the Terror, favouring it as an indispensable condition for a democratic republic and for the redistribution of wealth. Everybody, in his opinion, interpreted liberty selfishly, and such selfishness led to the enslavement of all. Terror must crush selfishness. Wealth was in the hands of the counter-revolutionaries, and the workers, the people, were dependent on such enemies. Those who made revolutions by half-measures were only digging their own graves. The properties of patriots were sacred; the properties of conspirators existed for the necessitous. Thus the property of all covetous enemies of the Revolution must go to the poor folk and good Sansculottes, and the Fourth Estate, a class hitherto disinherited, would be assured of a decent existence. Saint-Just was the apostle of the social revolution; a revolution in property.

## IV

Saint-Just, on return from a mission, rarely explained his doings in full either to the Committee or to the Convention, his nurtured laconism in these matters becoming a wilful proud reticence; as if he scorned to enlighten his fellow-deputies or to claim any personal glory in a reputed and often a genuine success, duty having been fulfilled, aims achieved; and he chose to regard victories as events demanding no grateful mention and soldiers as so many machines set in movement by himself. He foreknew the peril to civil administration from military triumph and fame on the part of this or that general, and imagined the danger of an indiscriminate sharing of republican virtue between Saint-Just and others; and he warned men in their excitement and joy against advertising military gain. Had they no fear of the armies, he asked, with his customary and judicial brevity, when pressed to account for his curious, grudging attitude; and again, and with real prescience, he said that some day they might see an ambitious fellow emerge from the armies, one who would kill liberty.

During the early months of 1794, when rancours, suspicions, jealousies and fear made storm atmosphere in and about the Committees, Saint-Just was yet more abrupt and surly, never genial, unless with Le Bas and Robespierre; for no doubt he had been overworked and his nerves were perpetually strained and tense, his veins fevered. What constituted a Republic, he said, was the total destruction of all that opposed it; and he saw himself as the prophet of that Republic, also the high-priest, and with a mission to establish its reign; therefore, anyone who interfered with him must be wicked, deserving a speedy, condign punishment. His resolve to inspire terror increased, and in his monumental assurance he held himself stiff and erect; as if his head were the Holy Sacrament, Desmoulins

had written, prompt to spy vanity and absurdity, delighting to scoff; and Desmoulins was not forgiven, and lost his unsacramental head.

Saint-Just with his cold hallucinations and frozen hysteria had reached the piteous condition of fanatical egoism and doctrinal infallibility only possible among religious and political visionaries; and disgust of enemies actual and fanciful spread in him like disease. He had repelled some of his colleagues, and notably Carnot; who declined to pay obsequious homage to the young apostle. When Saint-Just thought he had the right to scold about military affairs and assailed Carnot, blaming him too for incompetence, for usurping authority, Carnot accused Saint-Just of vanity and cruelty. Saint-Just's icy calm dissolved, became white-hot temper. He told Carnot he was treacherous: he, Saint-Just, need only write a few lines and Carnot would go hence to the guillotine. Carnot was not a man to be hushed in that fashion, nowise afraid. He called Saint-Just and Robespierre farcical dictators. The least suggestion of ridicule touched the pair to the quick. Saint-Just besought Carnot's expulsion from the Committee. Carnot shrugged. "*Vous disparaîtrez*," he said, foretelling the young man's doom. Saint-Just left the room, fraught with anger and menace. Carnot risked his head that day; for the design against Robespierre and his lieutenants had not yet matured; but the mood impairing Saint-Just's dramatic calm reappeared as crisis drew near, Carnot having proved stronger, more tenacious, than he; and Carnot, others of the Committee, were already sentenced in the mind of Saint-Just.

The Revolution, he had said, was as the thunder; and again: Factions born with the Revolution followed in its course like reptiles following the course of a torrent. He, and Robespierre, thought Revolution must quell with its lightning, reptiles having managed to creep into high place, fouling the nation's liberty,



the people's happiness: yet one more purge and France would be saved, Frenchmen free, the reign of peace and justice attained, all conspiracies at last annihilated.

He was summoned from mission to Paris; and unfortunately for him his reptiles were more adroit than he had foreseen. Robespierre, meaning to attack, suffered attack and defeat in the Convention; and would soon be outlawed. Saint-Just did not appear on that July day, Thermidor 8; and his absence gave rise to speculation later, to a vague and not credible theory that he did in truth seek to become a dictator himself and hoped to profit by the removal of Robespierre; that he had awakened fright and not love in Robespierre also. Saint-Just served as a weapon for his elder, a spokesman, above all as a stimulus. On Thermidor 9 he had prepared a defensive speech, persuasive and conciliatory, and with something of statesmanship, on behalf of Robespierre, emphasising his own austerity and purity as a citizen; and he showed an heroic abnegation, for had he kept silent, possibly he might have avoided proscription with others at that hour. He allied himself in spirit with Robespierre, now disdaining to justify himself as he stood motionless on the steps of the tribune, refused a hearing by deputies who howled at him. His colour changed, but otherwise he gave sign only of contempt for accusers; and in the few remaining hours of his life he sustained that attitude, quiet when others were clamouring in a whirl of excitement and dread, though he may have made one characteristic remark when an appeal to a Paris Section, or a proclamation to the armies, was under discussion by the outlaws and someone asked in whose name that appeal or proclamation should be offered; and answer came: "*Au nom de la Convention; elle est partout où nous sommes!*" the Convention being wheresoever he and his friends chanced to be.

Formerly he had found his idol in Robespierre,

considering the man as a god who worked miracles; no doubt he had adored that idol, though he had ceased to worship; and now he must die with and for it. At the moment of arrest there had been one suicide, other attempts. Saint-Just did not resist the Guards. He handed his knife to them, report said. He would prove that he scorned the act of self-murder, even as he scorned his enemies. The shame of death should be theirs, not his. Was he not strong in virtue? They took him to the room of the Committee, his Committee. Here he spoke, looking at a copy of the Rights of Man stuck on the wall by himself months ago: one bitter short phrase, and the rest was silence for him too.

Hours after, he stepped to the guillotine, playing his part, now in a death-charade. He was dignified, unshaken by terror, or a hope, or dismay. He stared at the noisy, derisive crowd, as if he were yet master of their fate, and his own. And he too died like a Roman, not yet twenty-eight. He had held office for less than two years, decreeing executions, granting lives, aping the wrathful young war-god through months tragic for his country and for himself.

## V

The memory of Saint-Just was defamed as if he were a monster lusting for blood, a mystery of iniquity; and on the other hand he was eulogised as the complete revolutionist who alike fought reaction and vicious democrats; who wrote that circumstances were difficult only for those who shrank from the thought of death. He prayed for death as a boon in face of villainies committed against his country and the human race. In his mission to abolish tyranny he played the tyrant, and was inspired by a deep though abstract love of humanity, a sympathy for downtrodden creatures, a

faith sketched in his fragmentary and posthumous *Institutions républicaines*; though he knew little of political science, dense for a time to the fact that good Constitutions were not made but grew, that customs and the national qualities of the governed and not the will of the government were the proper law-makers. If he had lived in the age of the Greek Republics, a colleague who became a foe wrote of him, he would have been a Spartan, choosing the institutions of a Lycurgus, living like Agis or Cleomenes; if he had been a Roman he would have made revolutions like a Marius, hating the aristocrats with as much fervour as he loved the people. His life gave proof that intolerance and fanaticism were not prerogatives of churchmen; and liberty to him meant the sovereignty of himself and the followers of his creed, the Believers, the rest of the political fry being regarded and treated as so many Infidels. His astounding quick stride to fame and power was due to the narrow rigidity and the audacity of his theories and to his unsurpassed vigour and promptitude in action. Such a man could expect to become a leader only at a time of revolution and of national emergency; and had he figured in the past he might have been a zealous and successful Jesuit missionary, or a highwayman.

There were plenteous seeds of wisdom in him, but vanity often coloured his vision; and Plato's remark that the best person to be entrusted with authority was the man most unwilling to accept it would have amused or vexed him. He lectured his fellows, punishing them when he had the means, as if they were all so many scoundrels or imbeciles; and he lectured the world. Let Europe learn, he said, that his countrymen willed that there should be no more unhappy folk, no further oppressions on French soil; that the Revolution propagated the love of virtue and joy, happiness being a new idea in Europe. There must be neither rich nor poor, for opulence was infamy; and by his

educational theories he hoped to train the new generation, giving State endowments to all schools, arguing that a child belonged to the State and parents had only secondary claims. Men were as nothing compared to the State; France must command, and they must obey. The strength of the Revolution lay in the people, not in a few famous names; and love of country must be exclusive, public interest immolating private interest, and without pity, fear, or a squeamish respect for humanity. This juvenile pedagogue was cursed, seeing himself as different from his fellows; and he made a machine of himself, exact, merciless in its progress, running successfully for a while by its own giddy momentum; breaking finally and inevitably in the abrupt and foredoomed impact with other machines equally spurred.

To assume omnipotence might be the customary business of a god, but proved disastrous to mortals, kings or commoners, who had to puke and squall as infants, and drivel and decay in old age if they escaped clubbing on the road graveward. Saint-Just knew that fact in his youth, and ceased to remember; ceased to share a hearty laugh or seemingly an intense affection with anybody; for though a biographer gave him more than one mistress, the writer reached bathos, accounting for end to the second romance because his hero saw the lady take snuff. And so, among the prominent men of the Revolution, Saint-Just was vindictive in his duty to promote terror, ridiculous and pathetic in his tumid conceit, noble in self-discipline, his contempt for death, his courage and the will to serve an exalted idea, and an ideal. He indulged his own self-esteem by making war on the self-esteem of others sometimes less worthy than himself, he being the new presbyter with the old priest writ large on him; yet his fate might have roused more pity than blame. He was little more than a lad when the rights of a despot were thrust on him, and had he lived he might have trained

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himself to an enduring and benign wisdom even as he schooled himself from sloth and thievery, ridding himself of dark abstractions and manias, becoming a great statesman; for he was beginning to realise that men were naturally social and peaceful, that force ought not to be used either to divide or to unite them.



MARAT  
(Musée Carnavalet)



## CHAPTER V

### MARAT AND THE SANS-CULOTTES

#### I

MARAT, like Saint-Just, had his execrators and his worshippers. Men denounced him as an ulcerous low fellow who incited the people to widespread murder and rapine; others revered him as a martyr who spent life and forfeited happiness in a consummate philanthropy. He raved against the servitude of labouring men and workless men, compassionate for the sect or faction he chose to represent exclusively, attacking royalists and traitors, commercial plutocrats, profiteers, war-contractors, and the sober liberals, as if they were so many rotted branches of one huge overshadowing tree. His life-story was a mesh of obscurities and contradictions, wisdom and follies, science and perhaps quackery, pity and fury; yet always he claimed to be the Friend of the People, and his hankering for democracy flamed even at moments when he scolded the people almost as angrily as he scolded the aristocracy of wealth and all well-fed bourgeois, shouting for a dictatorship in the name of the People he professed to love and strove incessantly to help. The Revolution had begotten and killed Saint-Just: Marat was reborn in it. Much of his pre-Revolution struggle for existence passed in thick shades, vague in outline; the rest of his days took colour from smoky red glare; and his hoarse grumblings and anathemas were heard at any time in streets, at crossways, in Assemblies and Committees, or from the many cellars and lairs to which he ran for cover and safety, hue and cry at his heels.

Whether Marat's family origins were Spanish on the paternal side, whether his father had been a well-



bred Protestant refugee, a man skilled in medicine, a poor house-painter and a designer, a high-minded intellectual or a shiftless adventurer, was doubtful, though he had considerable ability as a linguist and probably lived toward the end of a hurried life as a teacher of languages, a naturalised Swiss. Marat's mother may have been Swiss or French, living before marriage with her folk on the sparse gains from a hair-dressing establishment at Geneva; and she gave birth to her notorious son at Boudry, Neuchâtel, in 1743; to other sons and daughters, burdening herself and her laborious spouse in their narrow circumstance. Marat paid fulsome tribute to her in his manhood, owing all that was humane in himself to her devotion and magnanimity, her intense sympathy with all unhappy creatures. He could never be wholly trusted when he wrote about himself; for though trained in science and the author of innumerable small and large works on Light, Heat, Electricity, Physiology and Psychology, on abstruse and metaphysical subjects, generally he saw with the bloodshot eye of imagination; yet no doubt he spoke truth when he said he had been endowed with a sensitive spirit, a tempestuous character frank and tenacious, his heart open to heroic passions, above all to the love of glory and a hatred of cruelty, of all inflicted pain; indeed, when punished as a lad he refused to eat, gnawed by humiliation and misery, and at last sprang from a window and risked his neck in escape from a makeshift prison. In his seventeenth year he left home on a long, tormented and uncouth search for glory. He studied medicine at Bordeaux and Paris, travelled in Holland, making his way by tutorial work, teaching languages, since he too had the gift of tongues; other more ambiguous gifts, much hardihood and a touch of showmanship to allure the credulous; and he was ill-fed rather than overfed, unsteady in his march, never prudent.

He reached England, already calling himself Doctor,

and took a lodging in St Martin's Lane, familiar with the needy and adventurous French colony in the city, adventuring with them; borrowing from acquaintance, selling his medicaments, sometimes effecting cures; skilful, unorthodox, always extravagantly convinced of his own wide and diverse talents and able to impose his faith on others; withal an ardent radical, a revolutionary in embryo, sure his political views would save peoples even as his panaceas cured the sick. So he lived for ten hazardous years, producing his encyclopædic studies, words flowing from him in torrents, his facility with a pen as astonishing as his readiness to coin fancies and analyse facts in relation to most things in the world of phenomena; for he not only ran where others walked with caution; he jumped and capered, always existing in a fever of ideas and agitations, licentious, bold, impatient of problems not at once soluble. His first published work, *An Essay on the Human Soul*, printed in England, 1772, an anatomical and mystical treatise, pleased and bewildered a noble lord; by whose influence Marat had offer of work abroad in connection with the Russian Embassy. He declined; afraid of the Russian climate, he said; in fact, not ready to exile himself among barbarians, certain there must be triumphs for him and his gifts in a hub of civilisation. His work, expanded in two volumes, appeared a year later as *A Philosophical Essay on Man*; a challenge to Helvétius, serious enough to provoke a sharp retort from Voltaire when translated by Marat into French.

His next work, *The Chains of Slavery*, in which, as he wrote, the clandestine and villainous attempts of Princes to ruin liberty were exposed, drew the praiseful attention of English democrats, added political virtue to his equivocal fame as a *savant*, led to persecutions, if he spoke truth; to journeys here and there, and much renown among the radical and workmen's Clubs in the north country. Meanwhile his polemical writings

did not impede the spread of his medical pamphlets; and he visited Edinburgh, and earned an honorary degree in medicine at St Andrews. Thereafter his days had more of mystery. Many years later, efforts were made to identify him with a rascal named Le Maître, or Le Maire, or Mara, language-master at the Warrington Academy; who went thence to Oxford, robbed the Ashmolean Museum of valuable medals, fled to Dublin, lived on the proceeds of crime till his arrest and forcible return to Oxford; and since he had scholarship, the privilege of a *clerk*, he barely avoided hanging, and was sentenced to five years' hard labour on the Thames hulks. Le Maître apparently escaped from imprisonment, lay quiet for a time, cropped out at Edinburgh as a John White, teacher of languages; went to Newcastle, and prison again, now for debt; and reappeared, debtor at a Bristol prison, having opened a bookshop in the town and failed to thrive. Given the will to believe in the identity of Marat and Le Maître, evidence might be gathered and arranged to make a plausible tale; but there were grave flaws in the indictment, puzzling facts, and at least one letter utterly to smash hypothesis, unless that letter could be proved a forgery.

Anyhow, Marat, in 1777, had appointment in a royal household and with a salary of two thousand *livres* a year and allowances. The Comte d'Artois, a document announced, on the favourable report made to him of the upright life and conduct, the knowledge and experience in the medical art of Jean Paul Marat, and wishing to bestow on him a mark of his goodwill, granted him the position of Doctor of the Guards. Marat expected now to relish the honours attached to his appointment, and probably deserved them; his critics, however, said he owed his rank to a Marquise whom he had cured of illness, and had perhaps seduced. Undoubtedly he was famous at that hour, his numerous scientific works having attracted notice, likewise his

blazoned cures; and his experiments in optics and electricity roused the interest of Franklin and the notice of Goethe. Choiseul recommended him as a doctor to his friends; and Marat in his pomp and ephemeral glory became a candidate for the directorship of the new Academy of Science at Madrid: not another Cagliostro defrauding an hysterical public, this man; not blinding authority by guile as a charlatan.

He translated Newton's *Optics*, opposed to Newtonian theory, vain in these matters; and soon his inveterate habit of railing, and the beginnings of persecutorial mania, fouled his track. He fought orthodox science and the vested interests of the Academy, unable to tolerate even the least criticism, braving ridicule, yet sore, hypersensitive, nervously diseased, beating himself against impregnable defences; for the scientific walls of Jericho did not fall when he issued command. At the eve of the Revolution, public favour had left him, gone elsewhere in the dance for new excitements and heroes. He had spent his money on ceaseless experiment, shattering his health, and lived in a painful obscurity, having resigned in temper or been dismissed from the Comte d'Artois' household. No one seemed to know precisely how or where he existed; a would-be reformer, prey to an invincible sadness, a philosophic despair, after failure to prove the imagined power of his genius to an ungrateful world; yet at work on his experiments and driven to and fro over Europe, half-starved, enflamed in mind and nerves by many real and many fictitious affronts; now in conflict with all Academies and constituted authorities, for they had reviled him, made an outcast of him, destroyed his opportunity to save the world alike from the curse of autocratic governments and more autocratic tyrants in Science and Philosophy. Marat had lived in a very midnight of bitterness and dejection, and looked toward death as a profound relief, overwhelmed by the pain of the world and the

futility of endeavour, and oppressed by a cosmic dread.

There was much folly, a taint of madness, woven in the strange, haunted psychology of Marat, and perhaps he behaved like a rogue under the whip of circumstance, scorched by the lava in his veins; all joy withered in him, his features woe-bitten, haggard, drawn painfully, eyes staring, apprehensive, dangerous. Here was a man at war with Society, quivering for revolution and the hideous usage of Terror in his pity for other human outcasts, aggravated by the torment of his own life and the evil and wretchedness surrounding him. And he was stored as no other of his day with a piercing invective about to fly out and set his awaiting, combustible world on fire.

## II

He was in Paris at the end of 1788, physically a wreck, bedridden, unfriended, expecting soon to die in poverty and loneliness; and he revived once more, judging the political situation with the uncanny foresight peculiar to him and never long absent from him. He began a fresh series of polemical writings, continued with but few intermissions until the day of his death, usually indifferent to science at this calamitous stage, ignoring derisive Academies, aware that greater issues were at stake, a new arena having opened miraculously for him in which he would battle for a wider humanity, and progress to a glory hitherto denied to him.

His first shot in the fray sounded with the pamphlet, *Offrande à la patrie*, and the announcement to citizens that Privilege was doomed. He spoke of impudent ministers decried for their ineptitude, aviled by their thievery, abhorred for their excesses, and now under the ban of an indignant, long-suffering public; for they had been traitors to their master and to the

country and had led the State to a verge of ruin. He bemoaned the woes of the people and called on them to demand their rights. The true Marat torrent was at last in spate. A second broadside asked for union, and prudence; a third warned the people against the besetting French malady of infatuation. They must use severity in a choice of representatives for the States General, enlightenment and virtue being indispensable qualities in a deputy.

He left his bed, galvanised into life and hope and aim, strong enough to stand at the crossways and declaim passages from Rousseau's *Contrat Social*; and, rightly or wrongly, he claimed a popular and defensive share in the taking of the Bastille. Then he had the notion of a journal in which he could speak directly and each day to the people; and after preliminary and abortive effort, and a hectic search for supplies, he began to issue *L'Ami du peuple*, in September, with its motto, "Truth or Death." The first numbers were considered scandalous, as he admitted in his proud delight; but, he said, he had reason for attacking the National Assembly. How dare he use moderation when enemies at home and abroad were seeking to throttle liberty! Enemies must be exterminated. His audacity grew as the early struggles of the Revolution took shape. He saw in himself the watch-dog of Paris, having to bark by a duteous necessity, and day by day, sounding alarms and menacing all authority. He encouraged mobs, approving any violence on the part of a people cheated and driven by governmental impostors and taskmasters; and he denounced all repressive measures as so many insults to the Rights of Man and the ideals of liberty, equality, and a universal brotherhood. In his opinion, nature had offered abundant provision, and anyone deprived of such provision had the imprescriptible right to rob those who were stuffed with more than their just portion. Men must kill to save themselves, and devour

the palpitating flesh of their victims; they were entitled to oppress, enchain and massacre in order to avoid oppression. He qualified his dictums only by restricting the Rights of one man inasmuch as they encroached on the Rights of another.

Marat spoke of liberty and believed in equality. The rich had suppressed the poor. Now the poor must bring the rich to their own level of hardship and want as an initial step to a flat social level of modest happiness. He was a thwarted idealist; and in his failure to solve problems calmly and by reason, he stamped on them and roared, paradoxical, bizarre. He partly excused his gospel of violence, arguing that folk were brutalised by and saturated with misery and would give ear only to extravagant counsel and gross invective; therefore as a good journalist he used the means likely to fix attention, though he confessed he would rather his hand withered than that the people should do as he bade them. He was occupied with the care of their salvation, prepared to adopt any method whereby he could protect them from reversion to thralldom; and always he would be their incorruptible, brave defender.

Marat's journalism was spurred by the condition of Paris, the Court and ministers, the weak and inactive democracy of the moderates; and assuredly by the fevers of his mind and the torment of his body. He had been nervously deranged for years; and now he had a perpetual inflammation in his veins, and a suppurating tetter from the scrotum to the perineum, maddening him at times; and eczemas irritated and disfigured him. He said he was in the habit of working over twenty hours out of twenty-four as he lived or hid himself in airless cellars and unclean dens, taking no exercise, always more or less in pain; and though there was no measure in his written or spoken words at any time, yet he did in fact slave as few men, partly redeeming his extravagances in a lust for work and

social service, his pity for wretched folk being as genuine as his resolve to give himself to the uttermost on their behalf. His indifference to poverty and his own physical miseries, his refusal to sell himself, his gradual suicide in the attempt to warn Paris against the enemies of France, did honour to him; for though he seemed actually and morally loathsome again and again, there were nobilities in him, audible occasionally, visible to the discerning in his complete surrender to an idea of duty; invisible to La Fayette, Bailly, and their kind, who laboured to establish the Revolution and to curb anarchy, to direct human forces and silence rabid journalists and the demagogues.

The liberals and many of the Jacobins were hide-bound in their notions of justice, reason, sound government, and had little time and less will to probe the psychology of a Marat and discover grains of virtue in the welter of abuse from his pen and his pallid thick lips; and often his wildness ran to an unconscious villainy. Danton was repelled by the man and his terrors, but he at least divined the humanity at work in this passionate Thersites; and so Danton gave help and saved him from a second imprisonment, risking his own security in the tussle with La Fayette, Bailly, and the men of the Châtelet; for Marat had already spent about a month in a Paris gaol. His cellar was rifled, his printing-press broken, and he fled to London; came back after writing his *Dénonciation contre Necker*, once more took to his dodging from cellar to hovel, hovel to cellar, his printing and barking; poisoned, untamable, and ascending in popularity. An intelligent young woman, Simonne Evrard, succoured him and financed his journal, and won high place in the tale by her loyalty to him, her inexhaustible faith in him, her enduring with and for him; and his sister Albertine, a masculine tough woman, undiseased physically, otherwise a replica of her brother, she too was ready to spend life for him. He united himself to Simonne



Evrard in the romantic free style of a Rousseau hero, and not legally, called her his wife, loved her; and their relationship shone like a gem in the scurried dense mass of his painful and now and again pestiferous existence.

By the time the Legislative Assembly had embroiled itself and France, and Marat had fled anew to London, where he wrote his *École du citoyen* before the return, he was a saintly hero in streets and alleys, and authority dare not again risk the hazard of his arrest, though he had been denounced and must conceal himself. His unfailing gift of prophecy added to his mystery. His detective zeal and truculence grew with success and he glared to right and left, peered into dark corners, ferreted here and there, often nosing in garbage. He raised alarms against the Court, the Assembly, the Commune, exposing real and factitious dangers and intrigues; no trace of discretion or reserve in him; and he asked for heads by tens, hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands. Oppressors must be stifled in their own blood, the numbers swelling each month, so that finally it seemed as if France could be saved for liberty only when one half the people murdered the rest. Danton took advantage of the diabolic skill of the people's friend when staging August 10, and could not restrain him after; and Marat had a paramount share in the September Massacres at Paris, when, as it was written, there were scenes almost as bloody and iniquitous as those attending the suppression of rebellion by the English in Ireland during 1798. The Commune had control of the Assembly and the city. Marat wormed his way into its *Comité de surveillance*, forced himself on it illegally, and had welcome. He was nauseated by the sloth of the Tribunal set up to punish State criminals, and used this new vigilance committee to that end, ignoring the more reasonable majority of the Commune. He and his fellows sifted the prisons and prisoners,

and were responsible for the massacres. Those horrors shocked France, led to reaction of a sort; and though even Marat professed an intent to amend, he, almost alone, did not repudiate liability, arguing that such affairs were essential as a means to prevent affairs yet more dreadful; that terror alone could master terror. Cruel resource, he wrote, demanded by the law of necessity from a people reduced to despair; a necessity always justified by the wilful sleep of the law.

He had been outraged by the distinctions between active and passive citizens, and electoral privilege, shouting for a real equality; and he had his reward under the new democratic franchise, chosen as deputy to the National Convention by his following in Paris.

### III

Now Marat chose a new title for his paper, *Journal de la république française*, and a new motto: "Let us tax the rich to subsidise the poor," evidently in need of something more explicit than "Truth or Death." He had become the leader of the Sansculottes, almost a Fifth Estate, persuaded that they must have an apostle who would manage the Convention for them. The Sansculottes, so named because they wore trousers and not breeches, comprised the lower artisans, unskilled workers, and the leas of humanity who by circumstance or misfortune or a base heredity spawned in slums and existed like animals, unable or loath to raise themselves to a decent manhood. They were so much stuff for insurrection, already trained by revolts in company with their breeched neighbours, stung to rage by their unspeakable distress, and by the pen of Marat, who chided them for a brute stupidity and loved them for their suffering and degradation. They listened greedily when he spoke of equality for all men, equality being social redemption to them, more

precious than liberty to reputable citizens. They had been used to storm the Bastille, to fetch Louis from Versailles to Paris, to sack the Tuileries and flay the Court; and the rewards, the comfort and happiness promised to them, appeared as so much shameless trickery luring them to action before they were driven again to the sewers. Marat had often told them they were cruelly deceived, and would be ignored after service; that they and their families starved and would starve so that the propertied class might have luxury. They must claim their indefeasible Rights and take a natural share in a natural world by force, other means having proved ineffective. There was a stark logic in his onslaughts and grotesque incitements, and that logic found a ready mark. All people, he said, were entitled to the benefits of civilisation in return for good citizenship; now, however, men of wealth claimed prerogatives, taking the immense gains of the Revolution to themselves. The Sansculottes must rebel. They must punish their enemies at home before they marched to the frontiers to slay foreigners.

Marat continued to pose as a friend of the people; and so he posed in the National Convention. He had often called for a dictator, or a *triumvirate* of dictators, anticipating the approach if not envisaging the despotic character of a Napoleon, convinced that a representative with supreme authority could alone subdue the people's enemies; one who had shown himself most zealous for the people. Doubtless he saw himself, or perhaps Danton whom he admired, as the most worthy and reliable man for such a vital, though he said a temporary, office; and the dictator must have a cannon-ball chained to his heels so that he could not run from the people or defraud them. The dictator would lead them, and unearth traitors for massacre.

The Girondins, at the opening of the Convention, abominated Marat, their unappeasable, arch enemy; and they resisted him and his Paris faction, excom-

municating anyone who asked for a dictator or tempted crowds to pillage and murder. Marat had no friends, though fugitive supporters, in that Convention; and even Danton shunned him. The very aspect of the man was revolting to Girondins, to the stalwarts of a Third Estate, and his disease kept fellow-deputies from a near contact with him even as his incendiarism horrified a Condorcet and the liberal-republicans. Marat was said to love carnage like a vulture, to delight in human sacrifices like a Moloch, his own hyperbole having provoked hyperbole in his opponents.

He was a muscular, solid, agitated little fellow with a cadaverous expression and complexion, a shapeless great head, features nervously twisted and in constant, automatic movement, bitten by disease and pain and woe, the eyes wild, bloodshot, piteous, his brow wrapped in a vinegar-cloth to assuage the dolorous throb of his brain; and he dressed like a tramp, unkempt, sinister, his coarse shirt open at the neck and hairy chest, his clothes ill-adjusted, ancient, unclean, as if he meant to ape the Sansculottes, using his appearance as a defiance, a challenge theatrical and sincere to the property-owners with their ceremonious manners and social frippery; and his voice came hollow and croaking from tremulous lips, sometimes mocking, good-humoured now and again, more often threatening, uncontrolled only when he thought he spied hypocrisy. He had pleasure in the repugnance of his colleagues at sight and sound of him, and in his oratorical talents, forcing attention.

When the Girondins made their first co-operate attack on the Paris Commune in the Convention, Marat began to speak and was told to sit down. He gazed at them, unruffled, and said that apparently he had a considerable number of personal enemies in the assembly. All, all of them enemies! they answered. He repeated his phrase, would not be quiet: let his enemies show more modesty and not hiss one who

had given himself in sacrifice for France, and the safety of those deputies; let them be silent and he would not abuse their patience. Yes, he wished they had a dictator, a man wise, just, firm, and who loved freedom; one who would have no authority except to punish the guilty, meanwhile attached to the country as by fetters. He made way in argument, gained slight sympathy, objecting when Vergniaud said he reeked with calumny, malice, blood. Others of the Gironde called for his trial and imprisonment. Marat admitted excess in some of his writings; but he had new ideas, he said, and now gave adhesion to the Convention. Suddenly he drew a pistol, clapped it to his brow. He would scatter his brains at the foot of the tribune if an indictment were decreed against him! Was this the result of his years spent underground? of tortures endured to aid his country! this the result of vigils, toil, poverty, suffering, peril! Very well! He would not scatter his brains. He would stay where he was. He would brave the fury of his enemies.

The Girondins could not impeach him on that occasion, and so enfevered his mischievous writings against them: they were the foes of Paris; Paris must deal with them. Danton tried to intervene, pleading for unity; Marat persisted. The Montagnards, representing Paris and the Jacobins, contested supremacy with the Girondins; who were forced to a new conservatism, and reaction. They denounced the Sansculottes, factions, insurrections, mobs, and the *Comité de surveillance*, Marat's Committee; and they passed a measure whereby a commission chosen among themselves should enquire into the doings of that Committee, and with powers of arrest. Soon there was merciless war between the Girondins, academic liberals, moderates as they were, and the militant and democratic Montagnards, with the Clubs, the Commune, and Marat and his Sansculottes behind them. The Gironde policy of ordered and humane government and civil freedom at

a time of acute national peril, noble in its idealism, feeble in reality, attracted wily monarchists, dexterous royalists, therefore contamination, and afforded opportunity to Marat and others; who charged the Girondins with infidelity to the Revolution. Instruction had been given to reorganise the Commune, to cleanse it; yet the new Commune proved to be the old Commune revived and strengthened and far beyond control of moderates. The trial of Louis and the equivocal and impolitic manœuvres of the Gironde, added to their imputed sins in the regard of communists and Sans-culottes; and at each stage in the progress to destruction Marat leapt and barked at their heels.

The Girondins had their own dissensions among themselves, augmenting the confusion of faction, extending the conflict of policy. They refused to pass measures demanded by Marat and the resolute democrats for the suppression of corrupt war-contractors and the like, refused to regulate food-prices, to deal sternly with a financial situation once more alarming; refused to interfere with wages or to protect artisans from exploitation or to organise grain supplies or to harass farmers and others who were hoarding raw materials; in short, the Girondins meant to govern the country as if all drastic measures for the public safety and national defence were obnoxious and not requisite. And the Sansculottes, under the influence of Marat, contrasted their own privations and miseries with the palpable extravagance and opulence of war-profiters and a sordid and selfish new rich, Marat's loathed aristocracy of wealth. Strife at the capital had reflection in the Departments; and there were royalist plots and religious scuffles, federalist outbreaks, then civil war. France seemed about to fall into anarchy under the dread of invasion.

One of the last and most fatal acts of the tottering moderates led to Marat's trial. As President of the Jacobins he had signed a circular affirming the need

to proscribe the Girondins, calling for insurrection. He was accused of attempting to provoke internecine war, of wanting to establish a dictatorship, of trying to dissolve the Convention. Marat, revered by his Sansculottes and in favour with the Parisians who hated or distrusted or feared the Girondins, went from triumph to triumph, the issue of the trial never having been in doubt. At his unanimous acquittal he was almost smothered by a multitude of exultant adorers, taken to the Convention, escorted by municipal officers, National Guards, cannoneers, gendarmes, hussars, and a mob yelling "*Vive la République! Vive la liberté! Vive Marat!*" thus restored to his fellows, vindicated, beatified, as if he had escaped from imminent torture and his accusers were so many fatuous reprobates; yet the charges repeated against him by the Girondins were not without foundation. He was crowned at the Jacobins, though he protested, warning the Club against enthusiasm. Let them avoid such jejunities, he said, and think only of crushing their enemies.

The Mountain, the insurgent Commune, and Paris, were victorious. The Girondins had a little more than a month in which to writhe before the insurrection of June and their fall; that too largely due to Marat and his unsightly and worshipful Sansculottes, and to the Vendean rebellion.

## IV

The fever and perpetual angry strain of Marat's Revolution life, his nervous illness and disease, wore him to the bone; and after the fall of the Girondins he ceased to attend the Convention. In January of that year he had excused the occasional interruption of his journalistic work: he was overdriven, stealing only an hour or two for sleep, food, domestic affairs, devoting the rest of his days and nights to work as a

deputy, his reception of innumerable petitioners, unfortunate and oppressed citizens, defending them, stating their grievances in circulars and memorials, reading and answering endless letters; and he had to prepare new editions of his works for the printer, study all the events of the moment, and spy for traitors and the incompetent. His inflammatory maladies were making rapid progress, but he slaved on, now bed-ridden anew, attended by the faithful Simonne Evrard and his sister Albertine. His daily writings were concerned at this time with the accusations and denunciations that poured in to be edited and printed with his comments. He had laboured month by month against sedition, fuming and grumbling and sometimes biting; and now he wrestled with death. He had named himself a soldier of his country who fought for her with the audacity of an alert warrior, who knew the justice of his cause and was therefore upborne; and again, the old fox of the Revolution, whom nothing escaped; and if his zeal for the salvation of the people had carried him too far, must he be criminal because he had seen only the danger of the situation in his patriotic devotion!

His vitality had been as remarkable as his love of glory and his suspicion of all politicians; and it dwindled perceptibly, flickered, broke into smoky flame, relapsed again. The infection in his veins burst through all his pores, his shrunken little body was cankered, and he took to a bath shaped like a prodigious shoe to abate his torment, drenching corrupt flesh in medicated water hour by hour, a sheet drawn over his bare shoulders, a board in front of him, dining-table and writing-desk; this in a room with a brick floor too small to crowd more than half a dozen visitors, scantily furnished, and with a map of France, two pistols, a motto, "*La Mort*," on the mildewed, papered walls, the light or semi-obscurity coming through a window from a narrow, dingy court. Here he continued his work, gave



instruction to his printers, read proofs; and here the printed sheets were folded, the paper-rolls stored.

The state of the moribund friend of the people disquieted his public, and in July a deputation from the Jacobins came to make official enquiry and to express sorrow. They reported to the Club that patriotism rather than illness was killing their friend; that he made plaint because the Convention seemed to ignore him and had neglected measures for the public good sent to them by him. A Cordeliers deputation also visited him. They repeated a grandiloquent Marat-phrase at their Club to the effect that his only desire was to be able to say on a last breath that he died in content, the land having been saved. And so Marat remained true to himself and his accustomed vanities and foibles to the end; for he had another visitor the day after the visits from the Clubs, Charlotte Corday, a brave young woman as fanatical as he in her own quiet way.

She travelled to Paris by *diligence* from Caen, where she had met and spoken with rebellious, proscribed Girondins. She believed in *her* patriotism that Marat was the enemy of liberalism, freedom, peace, the cause of assassination, the flail of humanity. She set out on her tragic adventure, calmly resolved to kill him and to immolate herself. She arrived in Paris on the Eve of the Preparation of Peace, as she named the occasion to herself. She spent the night in an hotel, and made enquiry about Marat and his habits. Early the next day she went to the Palais-Royal shops and paid two *francs* for a large kitchen-knife in a mock-shagreen case. She put the knife in her bodice, then hired a hackney-coach for the drive to Marat's house. She spoke with the concierge and heard that Marat lived on the first floor and would see no one that day.

Presently she eluded the concierge, reached Marat's door. Here she met the maidservant, then Simonne

Evrard. She was baffled for the moment. She came again in the evening. She had already sent a note to him, promising news from the country. Now she held a second note, asking protection as an unfortunate. This time she got as far as a passage that led to the bathroom. She met the servant once more, said she had important news from Caen. Other callers had arrived; a young man with an account for Marat, another who ran errands. During this to and fro movement Charlotte Corday repeated her plea for an interview. She had to face Simonne Evrard again. Probably Marat overheard her. He shouted to Charlotte Corday. She found him soaking himself, head bound with a handkerchief, shoulders half covered, chest bare.

He spoke fraternally to her, always a *bonhomme* with simple folk. He wanted news of the Girondins at Caen. Simonne Evrard came with medicine for him, and left again, taking two plates from the window-sill; his untouched supper of sweetbread and brains. Charlotte Corday mentioned several Girondins. He made notes. All traitors, he said, would be guillotined. She stabbed him in the breast. He called to his good friend Simonne Evrard: "*À moi, ma bonne, à moi!*" He lurched over his writing-board, dead, bleeding profusely. Simonne Evrard ran screaming to him. She tried to staunch the wound with her hands. The two men hurried upstairs; neighbours came. Charlotte Corday was felled with a chair and lay still, though conscious. The police saved her from being torn by a crowd intent to avenge their Marat. She went to prison, trial, death, proud of her act, serene, having rescued France from a demon, she thought.

The inventory of his goods included but little furniture, and three presses, a box with an electrical machine, an iron bedstead. Marat had died as he had lived, scorning wealth, despising the venal, honest and upright in his domestic frugality, crazy in service to

the Revolution. His funeral bestirred Paris from the Convention to the most draggled and sluggish of its Sansculottes. The artist David had charge of theatrical ceremonies and civic pomp. He designed a burial-place in the garden of the Cordeliers Club suitable for an incorruptible republican who had died in an honourable poverty. The funeral procession began at five o'clock in the evening and went on till midnight: the bier, children holding cypress branches, the Convention, the Clubs and popular Societies, National Guards, sorrowing crowds. Guns were fired, chants intoned, and each Section of Paris defiled before the tomb and each President made an oration. A day or so after, processions escorted Marat's heart in an urn to the Cordeliers, where it hung suspended from the ceiling, like the hat of a defunct cardinal in a cathedral; and more talk ensued, likening Marat to Jesus: "O heart of Marat, O heart of Jesus! you have equal rights to our homage!" his journalistic idiom having infected mourners; but mourning was genuine, national, and men like Hoche wept in their grief.

For a time there was a Marat cult; in fact, a Marat epidemic. Books were consecrated to him, plays acted with Marat for hero, children baptised Brutus-Marat, Sansculotte-Marat; streets and squares and many towns took his name. In the autumn of the next year, the Convention decreed that he should have the honours of the Pantheon, and this despite reaction after Robespierre's fall; hence more processions, orations, music; and the remains of Mirabeau were taken from a side door of the Temple of Fame as Marat's entered by the main doors. Months later, however, Paris recovered from this particular hero-worship, and Marat's effigy was burned and the ashes were flung into a sewer; his desecrated heart did not swing from the ceiling of the Cordeliers; his body left the Pantheon and went to a neighbouring graveyard, Simonne Evrard and Albertine Marat being the only worshippers left at that

hour; and they were staunch in fidelity until death many years later, having loved Marat greatly.

## V

Marat had written that in his fifth year he longed to be a schoolmaster, at fifteen a professor, at eighteen an author, at twenty a genius consecrating himself to glory, then sacrificing himself to his country. He said he had exhausted the whole range of the human spirit, morals, philosophy, science, politics, extracting the best from all; that meanwhile he found his most tender pleasure in meditation, in those tranquil moods when the spirit admiringly contemplates the magnificent spectacle of nature, seeming to hear itself in the silence, weighing in the balance the happiness and the grandeur of humanity, piercing in its restless curiosity the sombre future, searching for Man beyond the tomb as far as eternal destiny. He may have believed himself at times when he prattled in this exhaustive fashion, and he gave no rest to his encyclopædic, flogged brain, actually tormented to solve the riddle of life and to shape an evangel for the betterment of a world stricken with pain. Truth and justice, he repeated, were his earthly divinities, and he estimated men by their personal qualities, not by success, respecting wisdom and admiring his notion of right. He convinced a multitude of his sincerity in these matters, and of his indignation against enemies and his pity for the oppressed; and his dramatic talents, his own trumpeted public and private virtues, were imposed on himself and his contemporaries, and led to his apotheosis.

No doubt he was a frustrated idealist and a romantic, soured with early failures, confronted with scorn, a prey to despair; and in the pursuit of glory he thought he had abundant genius and the power to save men, and wrought himself to distraction in the effort to

crush; for he had been thwarted in his will to create. His audacity equalled his vanity in the latter years, and the Revolution afforded him an opportunity to exercise one and the other, carried him to a pitch of notoriety that must have invigorated him even when he was distraught and when the majority of reasonable men avoided him.

Fabre d'Églantine, the creator of the fanciful revolutionary Calendar with its *Brumaire*, *Frimaire*, *Thermidor*, *Fructidor*, the old names for the months having been judged unworthy of the new France, wrote that simplicity was the key to Marat's character, defining his thought, words, acts; that always his insight accounted for things by their most natural cause and his genius had recourse to the most simple means; consequently he appeared extravagant to men who were the slaves of habit and prejudice, followers of routine, submissive to social cant and the prevalent humbug of the day. That too may have been partly true as the measure of the man. He had the simplicity of a child in his affections and sensibilities; and now and again he had the simplicity of an unmuzzled beast in his relation to opponents of himself and of the people. Always he lived in a state of nervous fever, and, toward the end, of physical agony; and his skill as a journalist saturated crowds with his own passion, and meant death. He said he belonged to no party, being a party in himself; and at a time when creative ideas were usually ignored in the stress and lunacy of war, his system of thought, if it could be named system and thought, turned to destruction, his rhetoric to vituperation, his imagination to blood, englutting the scientist, the philosopher, the theosophist, often the humanist, the lamentable sum-total parading itself with a grim and unconscious irony in praise of equality and freedom.

Revolution nurtured such a man. Marat's Sans-culottes were made for him as he for many of them.

## MARAT AND THE SANS-CULOTTES

The Insurrectionary Commune of August 1792, roused and used by Danton, took possession of Paris and the Legislative Assembly, and indirectly and momentarily of France; and the Sansculottes of June 1793, no longer content to be exploited by anyone, took possession of Paris, and the Convention. Marat died; but the Sansculottes, and the spirit of Marat in them, lived on to vex government and to soil revolution, until Sansculottes were subverted for a while, since there could be no permanent elimination of hungry ignorance and brute force at that stage in the process of human evolution; nor yet later.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONDORCET; AND THE FALL OF THE GIRONDINS

#### I

AMONG the men of the Revolution most hostile to Marat, the Marquis de Condorcet, *savant* and philosopher, took high place, distinguished by his character and mind rather than by genius as a practical statesman; indeed, like his friends the eminent Girondins, and others, he was much of a doctrinaire, therefore sometimes hampered grievously in the business of government; and his and their inability to level theory with fact and to deal forcefully with realities led to disaster, and liberty went into bondage. He too, like those Girondins, claimed independence of party, and he was in disagreement with Girondin policy on many occasions; nor did he actually fall with the Gironde, having a proscription reserved for himself. Nevertheless, Girondins' ideals and ambitions and some of their righteous follies were his, and if he did not wholly belong to them, yet he acted frequently as their spokesman and served as their mentor, consulted, now and again working with them; but though he also could make pretentious fine phrases in his solicitude for humanity, at least he avoided melodrama in an intense though apparently cold passion for chosen and sifted ideals.

He was the spiritual son of the Encyclopædists, had worked on the Encyclopædia, familiar with Diderot, Helvétius, d'Alembert, and the illustrious Turgot, taking his share in a more or less conscious preparation for 1789, representing all that seemed best in the eighteenth century. He, like the Rationalists who followed him, endeavoured to promote the increase of natural knowledge and to extend and develop the



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application of scientific methods of investigation to all the problems of life, assured there could be no health for mankind except by a strict veracity of thought and a denial of the fables and abstractions coined by theologians and dogmatic metaphysicians; hence he was in conflict with old organisation and doctrine, fancying the evil of the world had root in bad education and decrepit institutions. He was rational and scientific in his methods, as a rule, trying to reach definition after demonstration, though he did not fear a deductive philosophy in his quest for new constructive theory, reacting against rigid formulas, other than his own, possessed of vision, decision, and patience. The Revolution appealed to him as a rich, life-saving harvest, sown by men like himself who were now to have part in the reaping; and he perished, faithful to a radiant and not always unromantic belief in human progress and the perfectibility of man, and so proved himself to be another of the unsubduable heroes.

He came of aristocratic stock, guarded from many social miseries; yet of all the outstanding revolutionary figures, maybe he endured most in his early growth, saved from spiritual damnation and mental and other perversions, or inversion, only by a nascent manhood; for his mother, a widow formidable in her Christian meekness and piety, attempted to effeminise that helpless young lad, dedicating him to the Holy Virgin, forcing him to dress and behave like a girl for years in her anxiety to shield him from the world and to ensure his salvation. Thus he was weak and ailing, blighted in childhood; and difficulties in his maturity were twofold, arisen from struggle against outward circumstance, and an inward timidity due to his subtly cruel upbringing. His mother had hoped to sanctify him for apostolic succession; and he became the unrelenting, bigoted foe of Church doctrine, harsh in his war on the scatheful ignorance and the demoralising superstitions common, he thought, to all revealed religion.

Condorcet, however, as most learned men of his time, owed much to the Jesuits, who had control of education, not yet expelled from France; and they trained him soundly, made a notable mathematician of the youth. He went from Rheims to Paris, in 1758, now fifteen, and studied at the Navarre college; where, in the course of months, he upheld an analytical thesis, like a young Pascal; and d'Alembert, one of his examiners, hailed him prophetically as a future colleague.

His schooling advanced, his mathematical genius developed, and a few weeks after he reached manhood he published the first of his extensive and diverse works, *Essai sur le calcul intégral*, astonishing his scholarly contemporaries, establishing his name and early fame; and he won the friendship and patronage of the geometrician Lagrange. His sensibilities, meanwhile, were not absorbed to extinction in abstruse science. He had already braved his family, refusing on humane grounds to submit to a military or a priestly career, had already written a profession of faith to Turgot, whom he revered, affirming his disregard for theology, his devotion to the moral law, his worship of justice and virtue, ambitious to spend life in fostering the natural goodness and benevolence of man in himself and his fellows. He loved hunting, and decided to abstain, ashamed of having found pleasure in the pain and death of any live creature, revolted by the ferocious practice of killing for sport; and now he valued science only inasmuch as it furthered social amelioration, and would upset thrones and altars.

In 1769 he went with d'Alembert to Ferney to see Voltaire, and had much invaluable correspondence with the old humanist after, exchanging ideas, criticisms, hopes. In that same year he was elected to the Academy of Sciences, contributed mathematical and other papers; and he became perpetual Secretary in 1777, and a member of the French Academy, other European Academies, within the next five years. Among his

duties as Academical Secretary he had to produce biographical notices, *Eloges*, concerned with ancient members: essays, or discourses; the most permanent of his literary works, together with his *Vie de Turgot*, the *Vie de Voltaire*, and the last testament on the progress of the Human Spirit, written during proscription. His friendship with Turgot matured into a deep affection, a reciprocal admiration; and when Turgot took office, ready with his genius and humanity to raise France, and used the philosophers in specialised work, Condorcet had his place, assuming that a political millennium drew near. Turgot fell, France advanced to bankruptcy. Condorcet wrote sadly of brief and enchanting dreams now at end, and he returned to his geometry; so until the summoning of the States-General, when he forsook science for public work, married now, once more anticipating great dawn and a new France, sure that life would begin in its plenitude for him and his fellows, that the old society of dissipation without pleasure, vanity without meaning, idleness without repose, as he had written, would soon and inevitably make way for justice and virtue. Always Condorcet believed in Progress as a theologian believes in God. It was his dogma, an act of faith in him, though he thought experience and history alone directed him, and that he dealt with science, not a religion.

He had already issued polemical tracts and exordiums against the ineptitude of the King's ministers, had addressed men on behalf of his reformatory notions, decrying this and that social abuse; and he sermonised the electors redundantly and on various subjects, giving his views of despotism and the usage of those who took mere words for ideas. He tabulated his declaration of Rights, equal rights for men and women, he being one of the first of the feminists, and his faith in a Constitution and democratic control, in liberty, free trade, social and legislative progress, in the abolition of war and all slavery, addressing the Third Estate,

skilled in argument, a philosophical radical at this hour; an optimist, though awake to the inherent dangers of political experiment; and he laboured to advance financial reforms, and had no serious hearing then, nor after. He besought electors to shun candidates who had taken sides against the liberty of any man, or whose principles were unknown until they wanted votes; and he said that a man might be the enemy or the victim of a tyrant without being the friend of liberty: citizens must choose representatives who stood for the rights of man, not those who only professed compassion for the misfortunes of the people. He had his disappointments, no official part in the States-General; but he gave prompt and eager assent when invited to join the General Council of the Paris Commune. And so Condorcet began to confront invincible rough facts and had to make what he could from them, his mind encrusted though not petrified with humane abstractions, his spirit welcoming a life of social and administrative service that would lead him also to death within five chaotic thronged years.

## II

Condorcet was chosen with others to go to Versailles, enquiring into facts and rumour of a military conspiracy nursed by the Court. At once he became mistrustful of Louis, the Court, the executive, and began seriously to consider the advisability of a Republic even at that early stage of the Revolution. He supported La Fayette and Bailly in their efforts to curb anarchy, and nettled men like Marat, his thoughtful moderation seeming pusillanimous to them, anti-revolutionary. The methods of the demagogues were repulsive to Condorcet, who thought that reason and deliberation could alone prevail; in fact, he wished to deal with the blood-red phases of revolution as if they were so

many tough geometrical problems, to be solved by a close and patient examination. Marat, on the contrary, looked to a wholesale chopping of heads. Condorcet did not recoil, would not bargain with violence, his faith in a revolted people continuing staunch and creative, though, as an incorrigible member of the Third Estate, he meant to lead the Fourth. He had seen the brutality of masses subjected hitherto, loosed now, and apt to demolish, following their elementary notions of justice; nor did he expect anything better until they had been trained by education to a true and intelligent citizenship. He said that with privilege crushed they would and should be educated, humanised, made worthy of freedom; but what operation capable of any durable benefit could be understood by the people at the moment? how could they know to what extent good was possible? He and his like must forbear, considering the misery of the people, ready to help, instruct, cajole. Such were the views of many Girondins; and unhappily for them the people, the Sansculottes, refused to be cajoled by philosophical-liberals, and chose the Marats, as stubborn as Girondins in their prejudice.

The conflict between men of thought and men of vigorous action, between Idea and Will, grew steadily, nourished by the improbity of the Court and the turpitude of scheming *émigrés*. Meanwhile Condorcet attended to his municipal duties, wrote books and pamphlets, offering instruction broadcast, a preacher, beginning his incessant labour as a political journalist, founding a review for the reasoned analysis of the principal French and foreign political works on natural and public rights, legislation, finance, and so on. He collaborated in the *Journal de la Société de 1789*, a creator of that short-lived Club, wrote addresses to the National Assembly, aired his theory in other journals and news-sheets, had himself inscribed at the Jacobins, advancing in his radicalism; and the men of

the Right distrusted him as a social renegade, and the extreme Left hated him because he refused to be driven into hysterics by the national situation.

He had lost whatsoever of faith he may have had in Louis after the flight to Varennes, and resigned his administrative work as Inspector-General of the Mint; he had lost no shred of hope in the perfectibility of man. Peace, liberty, equality, happiness and virtue, all were possible, he said dogmatically, and there could be no term fixed to progress, the work of reason fortified by meditation and built on experience. His philosophy, he wrote, was cold and patient: he would be less alarmed by sounds of conspiracy than by false political systems; more at enmity with false opinions when they were new and flattered the multitude than with old prejudice already doomed. He could not say that all was well; he did say that all would be well: prejudice in the last year had received many rough shocks; and human reason, though excessively agitated, only needed time to regain calm. He at least had not lost outward calm; indeed his calm was mistaken for insensibility, and some of his friends were critical. Madame Roland said that Condorcet's mind resembled a subtle liqueur spilled on cotton-wool; Rivarol that he wrote on leaden pages with a pen dipped in opium. Condorcet, however, could flare on occasion, his equipoise being largely a matter of discipline; for there were suppressed impetuosities in him, touched at times and set in motion, usually by an echo of theological absurdity, Church despotism having proved even less tolerable to him than the ascribed wickedness of Kings and predatory aristocrats.

He was elected to the Legislative Assembly after a sharp contest, one of the Paris deputies, the royalists and many of the Feuillants having attacked his republicanism and a supposed apostasy as energetically as some of the visionaries attacked his attitude to unreason and disorder. He was chosen as one of the Secretaries

to the new Assembly, and composed most of the addresses of that parliament, more successful with his pen than as an orator naturally timid and ill at ease when facing a restive audience; and he presented an elaborate and democratic scheme for a system of State education, a labour seemingly in vain, war being in the way, exciting men, though Condorcet's ideas were the basis for educational plans ultimately adopted by French legislators. In November, 1791, he joined the *Chronique de Paris*, and was announced to subscribers as a celebrated philosopher, a friend of Voltaire, who had studied to enlighten men and would now report the doings of the Assembly in the journal; and until the destruction of the press, over a year later, he wrote a daily article, closely following the unstable political situation, keen as a critic, always trying to direct public opinion and to influence administration, now a declared republican, and at a time when republicanism otherwise whimpered in obscure infancy.

He had share in the war policy of the Girondins, the Brissotins, agreeing with them that France would not undertake any war of conquest, would never employ force against the liberty of any people; but neither would she tolerate *émigré* machinations or foreign interference with the Revolution. Peace was the ideal of Condorcet and of his Girondin acquaintance; but if *émigrés* and European powers manœuvred to invade and to devastate the land, France would be impelled to arm in spite of herself. France loved peace, he wrote; but she did not fear war. Nations must learn to respect her, and the Revolution. Condorcet's pacificism had failed, for the time being.

He acted and spoke with the Girondins in the strife between King and Assembly, Feuillants and Jacobins, and among themselves; for with the new Assembly ambitious literary men, and their incurable asperities, vanities, egoisms, crippled statesmanship, and the struggles of revolutionary France against



enemies within and without were yet further embittered by the conflicting envy and jealousy of revolutionaries. He had his turn as President of the Assembly, and did not cease to give an account of the sittings, analyses of debates and the general state of things in his *Chronique de Paris*, moving toward the Left, cautiously and logically, before the equally cautious and logical search for a durable centre; and he too saw the necessity for conclusive measures in the months preceding August 10, and could admire the crowd's abstention from bloodshed during the first raid on the Tuileries in June, excusing uproar at the Palace. On that day Louis had been forced to cover his royal head with a red bonnet. Such a crown, Condorcet said, was as good as another, and a Marcus Aurelius might not have scorned to wear it.

The later insurrection attained its end, and Condorcet had to temporise with a successful and militant faction, and with his own principles; for August 10, finally destroying monarchy, flouted the Legislative Assembly, compelled that Assembly to annul itself and to call for a National Convention. Condorcet understood the facts, sometimes almost as perspicacious as Danton, though he deplored them, power having been stolen from the legislature and vested in the Commune. However, he composed his *Exposition des motifs*, an apology for the Assembly, and for August 10, and a severe attack on Louis; who, Condorcet thought, had provoked civil and foreign war, excited priests and *émigrés*, called to an Emperor for help, discredited the legislature and had paralysed national defence. Condorcet's principles were yet more painfully outraged by the September Massacres, and he preferred to draw a veil over events of which it would be most difficult at the moment to estimate the true character and possible effects: grievous and dreadful pass, he wrote, when a people naturally good and generous was constrained to deliver itself to such vengeance.

## CONDORCET; FALL OF THE GIRONDINS

France had reached a stage when philosophical radicalism, with more of philosophy than of radicalism, perhaps, seemed futile, nearly ridiculous; and in her need she chose a Danton, not a Condorcet.

At the elections for the National Convention, Paris would have no more of the Girondins, and Condorcet and the group were defeated; and he had an enemy in Robespierre, the one and the other being antagonists by temperament; but the Departments, reacting against the city, saved the Girondins from political extinction. Condorcet was elected for the Department of Aisne, with Saint-Just as a fellow-deputy; and he took his place in that Convention.

### III

The Girondins were pledged to restore order and to protect civil liberties against what they regarded as mob law. Opponents sneered at them as the party of the *salons*, for they met at the houses of their acquaintance, often at Madame Roland's house. Her husband, Minister of the Interior, had become something of a dignified and ornamental dummy in habitual submission to her; and he was patient with her courtiers. She was adored by the dreamy and romantic Buzot, a fanatic under her influence, and the orator and leader of rebellion later; and many of the Girondins' political adventures and misadventures were planned in Madame Roland's *salon*, unhappily for them. Danton had been fraternal with these men, and he appealed to them for aid in his labour after August. Condorcet was able truly to estimate the character and talent of Danton and wished to help him, critical of the Rolandists and the majority of his Girondin friends, aware that many of the reproaches hurled by them at the Montagnards were as unjust as several of the Montagnard charges against Girondins; indeed he saw the Girondins as

the aggressors, had sympathy with Montagnard politicians, and objected to the denunciation of his venomous foe Marat as inopportune and unwise, though he detested Marat.

Madame Roland, implacable in her enmities, could not bear Danton's monumental ugliness, his coarse humours and jocose good-fellowship. In her *Memoirs* she showed no restraint, no critical acumen when writing of him; and her foibles were senseless and vicious. Danton exercised a forbearance with her and her friends admirable in one as impetuous as he; and without avail. The September Massacres aggravated Madame's feelings. Her enthusiasms for the Revolution were known, she wrote: well, she was ashamed of a Revolution polluted now by scoundrels and made hideous to her. She attributed the massacres to Danton, emotion invariably mastering reason in her, antipathies transforming a noble, brave woman into a dangerous scold. Danton turned from the Rolandists, driven to look to the Mountain for encouragement in his endeavour to save France and the Revolution. A score of times, he said, he had offered to make peace with the Girondins, but they were unwilling to meet him, refused to believe in him, tried to ruin him, therefore he relied on the Sansculottes; who would devour them, and him, and would at last devour themselves.

The attitude of the Girondins in the trial of Louis, their anxiety as good liberals and farseeing statesmen to ensure his life, and as republicans to crush a monarch, their oscillations and uncertainties and quarrels, helped to their fall, and to the fall of Condorcet. He voted that Louis was guilty of having conspired against liberty, sure that the political sins of the King were evident and abominable, but he was not for a death penalty, urging the most impressive punishment other than death; and he abstained from voting on a postponement of execution, and he voted against an appeal

to the electors for ratification. Thus he was not in a strict agreement with the Girondins; and he vexed the Montagnards. He held to reason, as it appeared to him, in the conduct of affairs, impersonal as a rule; whereas many of the Girondins were emphatically personal, and vindictive, unready to see themselves ousted from authority by men who had been friends and were now their foes, prepared to risk the downfall of France rather than to have France upheld by a government other than their own, steeped as they were in a conviction of their own moral and political rectitude and the wickedness of anyone who opposed them. Condorcet had more of wisdom, less of self-esteem, though there were vanities in him too; and he deeply regretted the Girondin break with Danton; a man, he said, who had the rare faculty of neither hating nor envying genius in others. Then Condorcet also began to smart under the lash of Marat and the extremists, and he behaved like a Girondin, frequently classed with Girondins by their opponents, though maintaining his independence of spirit.

The Girondins had been mainly responsible for the departure from the original pacific, no-conquest decrees of the National Assembly embodied in the first Constitution, and for the crusade to spread the Rights of Man by irresistible example; then by armed propaganda. Girondin hopes for a model republic, and their war policy, to which Condorcet had made submission and for which he had written manifestos artful and sophistical, clogged executive machinery and led to army disasters, to the rise of Danton with his initial claims for natural frontiers, to the imposition of liberty on foreigners, who had to pay so that France might provision her troops. These retrograde steps and the revival of old France at the evangelising heart of the new France, involved the Girondins in growing difficulty and a tangle of contradiction. The trial of Louis had exposed the divisions among them; the defection of

Dumouriez, whom they had trusted, further weakened them. They survived for a time, having power of a sort in the Convention, resisting fanatics, and others; and they pressed for the autonomy of local government in every city and parish, stoked enmity against Paris in the Departments, giving colour to the heinous charge of Federalism improperly levelled at them. Hence, and above all, they were blamed for the Vendean rebellion; and their efforts to conserve the freedom of the middle-classes against a wider democracy and at an hour when liberty had to shoulder war-harness and freedom became a mere name, exposed them to yet greater dangers and they were accused of counter-revolutionary designs, of protecting the enemies of France. They failed to oust Danton, and against Marat, forcing his trial, thereby giving a first example to men who would succeed against them; yet as late as May, 1793, with help from the uncertain, tepid Plain, they were solid in the Convention, though now discredited generally, and loathed in Paris.

The Jacobins had instructed their country members to send petitions to the Convention for the dismissal of the Girondins, who were supposed to be undermining the Revolution, who had tried to save Louis from death; Marat barked day by day; and Hébert, a brilliant, coarse journalist, once a moderate, now wild in print, sharing Marat's violence and with only a shred of Marat's compassion and benevolence, and a cynicism peculiar to himself, he too had his share in the clamour.

Soon after Marat's trial, a large majority of the Paris Sections, accompanied by the Mayor and blessed by the Commune, made petition at the Convention against twenty-two Girondins, including Brissot, Vergniaud, Buzot, Pétion, most of the leaders, and not Condorcet. Pétion, in a letter to the Parisians, warned folk that property had been threatened, and war might arise between those who had possessions and those

who had nothing; that a handful of incendiaries were dragging the city to disruption; and he called on men to shake themselves from lethargy and to drive poisonous insects underground. The Sansculottes retaliated, with aid from the Clubs and Montagnards, and called for a revolutionary-army drawn from the work-people to watch over Paris and to hold other people in check, the costs to be borne by the rich. Class struggle drew near to a meridian. Desmoulin's hoarse pamphlet against the Brissotins added fuel to fire, naming Girondins as the paid agents of England and Prussia: a charge used by all sides in the conflict. Then a Girondin denounced the Paris Commune at the Convention: those anarchists greedy for money and power, he said, and who must be superseded forthwith. There were Girondin plans to summon armed forces from the Departments to smash opposition: representatives would remove to Bourges for safety, otherwise, and deputy-substitutes could recreate the Convention. A committee of twelve was appointed to hold an enquiry into the charges against the Commune; a Girondin committee, including several of the denounced twenty-two. They took repressive measures, ordered the arrest of Hébert and others, precipitated crisis.

Petitioners once more raided the Convention, and demanded the release of prisoners. The Girondin Isnard, President that day, made the fatal remark that if ever the Convention were humiliated by insurrection, and any injury occurred to that representative body, then Paris must be annihilated in the name of all France, and men would search the banks of the Seine to see if a city had ever existed. Jacobins and Montagnards, and Marat, voiced the anger of Paris and called for the prosecution of the twelve committee men, since they were hostile to liberty; and the Convention had allowed commodities to rise to outrageous prices, nor would the people submit! Now the Convention became a tumult, sitting in the old theatre at the

Tuileries; and on May 27, about midnight, a catch-vote dissolved the offending committee and decreed the release of prisoners. The next day that vote was annulled. The Sections had been summoned, insurgent committees were formed; and the Commune allowed itself to be led. Insurrection broke out on the last day of the month.

Hanriot, a little, hot-tempered fellow with a stout heart and a shallow pate, blinking eyelids, nervous twitches, and a muttering, indistinct voice, except when he roared like a bull, had command of the National Guard. City-gates were closed, bells rung, guns fired to call the people to arms. A mob at length swarmed round and about the Tuileries. Girondins had been discreetly absent, but they reappeared to protest. In the afternoon, petitioners from the Sections and the Commune again demanded the proscription of the twenty-two, the committee of twelve, and two ministers; the raising of a central revolutionary-army to force the control of food prices, the arrest of all suspects, and a programme of advanced democratic legislation. A new deputation protested against Isnard's threats, and sat themselves on the benches of the Mountain. Now the Girondins protested against these protests and such violations of the Convention. Deputies railed at each other. Presently, squabble ended for the moment in compromise. The Convention abolished the committee of twelve, and agreed to pay forty *sous* a day to all Sansculottes under arms. The crowds outside were appeased, and went home. The opening spurt of insurrection had only in part succeeded.

Marat was indignant, and upbraided the Commune and the insurgent committee the next day. They prepared a new address, sent it to the Convention at night, busied themselves. They ordered the arrest of Madame Roland and her husband. She made no attempt to hide, and went to prison. He concealed himself; and at last fled to Rouen. Hanriot was

instructed to invest the Tuileries. Marat himself rang the tocsin at the Hôtel de Ville. He called his Sans-culottes to action, resolved that there should be no half-measures this time.

On the morning of June 2, a Sunday, eighty thousand armed men with over sixty cannon besieged the Tuileries. A deputation once again demanded the immediate arrest of the twenty-two and the twelve. The Convention were oppressed that day by news of Vendean successes, and of royalist and Girondin rebellion and the slaughter of republicans at Lyons. A vote referred the present imbroglio to the *Comité de Salut public*. Hanriot, dressed for military gala, sat on his horse, quiet, impassive. He had given order that deputies should not be allowed to leave the hall. His men were in position, his cannon pointed. A deputy inspired by Danton suggested that the Girondins should voluntarily suspend themselves. Several agreed, others said No. While they were arguing, complaints arose. Members wanting to ease themselves had been hindered from leaving the hall.

The deputies went out in a body, led by the President. They came in sight of the placid little fellow on the horse. He would not discuss anything with them. The people, he said, were not there to listen to phrases. Girondins must be arrested. He bellowed on a sudden to his artillery-men: "*Canoniers, à vos pièces!*" The Convention trailed itself here and there, repelled by bayonets and crowds shouting "*Vive la Montagne! À la guillotine les Girondins!*" Marat yelled at his fellow-legislators: they were cowards, forsaking duty! Back with them! The crowd laughed heartily. Deputies took to their benches again, saddened, perplexed. Jacobin Couthon, good-humoured, maliciously gay, said that now members could recognise they were free in their deliberations. He proposed that the culpable Girondins should not go to prison at once, but might be guarded in their



## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

own homes. This was decreed. And so the Montagnards, Commune, Sansculottes, had their bloodless victory, and on behalf of national defence. Within a few hours, Girondins who did not choose to imprison themselves sped to the Departments, to organise rebellion, bloody victory, if they could.

### IV

Condorcet, during months of war, insurrection, public and private enmities and feuds, jealousies, intrigues, had succeeded as few men in maintaining his dignity, faith, conviction, attending to duties, industrious with his reports and commentative journalism, his writings on jurisdiction, finance, education, remembering that the real business of the Convention had been to fashion a new Constitution, the end of monarchy having annulled the old Constitution, number One; for in his opinion only a Constitution could restore order, reduce faction, and consolidate the power of the Girondins. Early in 1793 he had reported on a Constitutional plan, his work, framed in committee; and the Montagnards had opposed him. He persisted, urging the Convention to fix a date for the convocation of primary electoral assemblies who would accept or reject a new Constitution, if schemes were mature and approved; otherwise they could name a new Convention. Debates were drawn out, talked out by the Montagnards, and no part of the Constitutional plan came to a vote. Many of the deputies were not in the mood or temper studiously and impartially to reconsider legal reforms, civil codes, political organisation, education; and Condorcet, yet persisting, hampered himself, offending men by his eminently justifiable objections to party brawls and egoism, he too occasionally vexed, his calm in a ruin for the moment, declaring for instance that Robespierre had neither an idea in his head nor a feeling in his heart.

He was described at this time as a man sagacious and cultured, with a wide brow, a keen, quick glance, his features often benevolent in expression, a little melancholy; and showing sign of fatigue after untiring labour with brain and pen, failing in health, troubled at his chest, his voice uncertain, unable to sustain long speech; and his natural timidities impaired his self-confidence in the disastrous summer of 1793. He did not forsake the Girondins, and he braved the Montagnards, accusing them roundly of having mocked at national representation; and when they produced their own Constitution in opposition to his, he returned to the onslaught, alike at the Convention and in his journal, aware that he had been tricked by political gamesters more cunning than himself.

After the June insurrection, Montagnards exerted themselves to bridle the insurgents and to secure protection from mobs, having achieved their object in excluding the Girondins from all office and authority, and the insurrectionary committee became a watch committee under the guidance of and paid by the *Comité de Salut public*; nor were Montagnards unanimous in pursuit of Brissot and his group. The Plain resented the raids on the Convention, and seventy-five deputies signed a most solemn protest. Danton and his friends certainly deplored any further acts against Girondins now seemingly impotent to interfere with severe measures for the national defence; and had the Girondins kept quiet and inactive they might have been forgotten, left in peace; but a dozen had escaped from Paris on the day of accusation, and others followed. Barère, a popular lawyer, amiable, supple, unscrupulous, able to smell the wind like a Talleyrand, and to trim his sails like a crafty mariner anxious to sail and not ready to founder in the name of an idea or a theory, he too in reaction against Sansculottes, proposed that the Revolutionary Committees should be abolished because they were instruments of

anarchy. He wanted to dismiss Hanriot, appoint a fresh general staff for the National Guard, restore liberty to the Press and send hostages chosen from the Convention to the Departments represented by Girondins under arrest, to placate them. Danton agreed, and spoke in praise of the Gironde.

These conciliatory plans were at once made null and void. Rebellion in the Vendée had become formidable, yet several of the Girondins who had reached the Departments, and in opposition to others of their coalition, were already raising troops to avenge themselves, regardless of the national peril. Buzot went to Normandy, frightened his electors by prophesying dictatorship and massacre by Parisians, and gathered four thousand men in arms. Other Departments took fire from example. Caen became the rebellion centre of the Girondin west, Bordeaux expelled *représentants en mission* and raised twelve hundred men, Toulouse freed royalists and imprisoned Jacobins, Marseilles revolted on behalf of the Gironde, Toulon invited the English to occupy the town. Over fifty Departments were affected before the end of June; and at Lyons all Jacobins in sympathy with the Mountain were arrested by Girondins, terror had its way, the town a rebel army. These uprisings attracted royalists, to the dismay of Girondins, who were unfeigned republicans, faithful to the Revolution, saw themselves promoting the destruction of their own policy, and were lamed at the outset. Consequently Girondin revolt failed; and the men who thought that personal liberty was a product of civilisation only restrained by the liberties of others, and had made war on Europe without the will or the genius to prosecute such war thoroughly, hovering between clemency and severity; meritorious good liberals, idealists, the volatile high-priests of political philosophy, and bad patriots who had collected troops against Paris and a centralised government; these men now lost spirit, energy, hope, Girondism once more

having proved futile, divided by conflicting theories often neither definite nor precise. Buzot, Pétion, Brissot and the rest of them accepted defeat and began their hapless wanderings, outlawed presently and in concealment, existing like pariahs, shunned by most of their acquaintance, tracked by their foes. Charlotte Corday had been incited at Caen to regard Marat as the foremost enemy of the Girondins and of France; and she at least did not recoil from the extreme logic of her theories, and so took her murderous journey.

Girondin treason had reverberations in Paris and men of the Plain, though sorry for proscribed deputies, were quietened. Danton ceased to defend them, could no longer help them; and the Montagnards, not all Montagnards, were bent on their extinction, said they were proven conspirators, which was true, and royalists, which was untrue. Warrants were issued, distinctions being made between intransigents like Buzot, Pétion; only part-accomplices, like Vergniaud; and the misguided, who might be allowed to return to the Convention. These lenient proposals, and a grant of several days in which rebel troops would have time to repent and disband, served at length to end the Girondin revolt in most quarters, though Lyons and Toulon had advanced past recovery. Montagnards gave sops to the Fourth Estate and decreed that confiscated *émigré* properties should be divided into small lots, and humble purchasers might have ten years in which to make full payment; that the property of the Communes should be shared on a principle of equality; that feudal dues based on title-deeds yet remaining should be liquidated, and without compensation. Then the Montagnards, to soothe the middle-classes and as a sound expedient against federalism, produced Constitution number Three, in a few days, beginning with a new Declaration of Rights; a simplification of Constitution number Two, democratic in tone, and

with a property clause to the effect that Society must support the impoverished by giving them work or alms, and a clause subordinating ministers to national, representative bodies, in opposition to Condorcet's scheme to render the Executive Council independent of the Assembly, though elected by the people. This Jacobin Constitution of 1793 was submitted for popular ratification, secured a large majority in the country, and lapsed, the deed having been enshrined in a box like a covenant-ark, to stand in the Convention hall awaiting the hour when tumult should cease and Constitutional government might take the place of revolutionary government imposed by the war situation.

The death of Marat angered Paris again, and was motive for a spring from conciliatory to repressive measures, giving argument to those who preached terror as the only means of smashing counter-revolution; for the Vendéans were now thriving in civil war, the Girondins defiant and slaughterous at Lyons; and *émigrés* promised holocausts, foreign powers issued anathemas. Contractors for army provisions, equipment, horses, field-hospitals, munitions, arms, and so on, were soaked in cheater, monopolists starving folk and making fortunes, and malversation spread like dry-rot. In face of these perils, Danton was accused of being too indulgent, lost his place on the *Comité de Salut public*, and allowed himself to be driven away; and the reorganised Committee began its colossal task, and meant to continue until the peace. Here was no place for a Condorcet with his moral law and the ritual of calm deliberation, freedom of speech and movement; for the Jacobins were determined that there should be no government by philosophy at this stage in French history. Condorcet's attacks on the Jacobin Constitution, his attitude to incipient dictators, his unflinching loyalty to the Girondins, had sequel in the anonymous *Avis aux Français sur la nouvelle constitution*, secretly printed and sent to the Depart-

ments. Invasion at the frontiers and rebellion at home had not diverted his critical work, and his obstinate adhesion to untimely notions brought ruin on him; for had he chosen to be silent during those summer months he too might have been saved.

His *Lettre aux citoyens français sur la nouvelle constitution*, yet more vehement in blame, vindictive here and there in its rage against the foes of the Girondins, unjust in defence and offence, was high treason to Montagnards. He argued that Sections of the Jacobin Constitution would petrify rather than organise government and gave administrative opportunity to men idle and corrupt. Chabot, member of the *Comité de Sûreté générale*, an excitable and splenetic ex-Capucin, drew the notice of the Convention to the second Letter, and asked for the arrest of Condorcet; who, Chabot said, thought it his duty to force laws on the Republic because he had chanced to sit with a handful of *savants* at the Academy. Vigorous attacks on Condorcet followed, and there was a decree of accusation. He went into hiding, alarmed for his wife and young daughter, sure that accusation meant condemnation, justice in his opinion having become farcical. The Convention decided that men who did not promptly surrender to a decree of arrest were traitors to the land, therefore outlaws. Condorcet was outlawed: death without trial on capture.

Hitherto most of the enemies of the Revolution had been sought among royalists and unconstitutional Catholics; now, however, with republicans like the best of the Girondins, and a Condorcet, outlawed, anyone might be guilty; and the Law of Suspects, that procuress of the guillotine, brought all citizens under a reciprocal supervision, led to domiciliary visits, the purging of Clubs and popular Societies, local administrative bodies. The possession of wealth, property, seemed nearly as harmful as intimacy with the Court formerly; and an extended law of *maximum*

put fetters on trade, uncompromising Jacobins and Cordeliers having mastership. Terror had begun in the name of Public Safety. The Girondins had been overthrown, Danton and his friends were under suspicion; and early in October the *Comité de Salut public* sent a report to the Convention implicating one hundred and twenty-nine deputies, forty-three of whom were to be sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal, including the Duc d'Orléans, sixty-five placed under arrest; this in addition to the decree of outlawry against absconding Girondins; meanwhile, to reassure the Plain temporarily, the proscription of the arrested seventy-five deputies who had signed the protest against the June insurrection was held up.

## V

Immediately after Chabot's proposal at the Convention, Condorcet fled to a small property at Auteuil. Among his friends were two doctors who had lodged as students with a widow, Madame Vernet. They knew her character, sympathies, courage, and prevailed on him to take refuge at her house in Paris, repeating that his whereabouts would be kept secret and he might be less endangered with her. She had been asked if she would help him. Condorcet was virtuous and honest, she said; he must come. And let him come at once; even as they talked he might be caught. Thus he entrusted his life to a woman of whom he had not heard until this hour, immuring himself closely. His property was confiscated, as all properties belonging to outlaws. He had no resources, existing frugally, thanks to Madame Vernet, and to his wife; who, after plenty and splendour as an aristocrat, made sketches of anyone who wanted a portrait, here and there in the city, the prisons, the *salons*, conserving her small gains; and to protect herself and child from

laws affecting the wives of such men, she took advantage of new divorce measures, ceased legally to be his wife. He had insisted, and was distraught.

Condorcet at first hoped to employ tedious long days in writing an account of his political life, the *Fragment de Justification*; but he tired of this, and began his study on the progress of the human mind: *Prospectus ou esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, giving the successive changes in society, the influence that each instant exerts on the succeeding instant; hence, in its successive modifications, the advance of the human species toward truth or happiness. His legacy to mankind, it was named; one of the two dozen decisive and characteristic views governing the world, that every man should master in order to understand his age. Condorcet's friends provided him with a few books, yet to a considerable extent he had to rely on his memory, his wide erudition, for material, analysing human development and motive, dividing society into ten epochs; and he sketched theories developed by later writers and foreshadowing the principle of Creative Evolution. His intimates visited him surreptitiously, admiring his gentleness and patience, his solicitude for men, his family; above all, for the Revolution. He had news of the Girondins' trial and execution; and his anguish at thought of them, his sudden fear for himself and Madame Vernet, agitated his apprehensive mind profoundly.

Late in October, 1793, Girondins were brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, now divided into four Sections to facilitate the increasing work, having its several judges and many jurymen; and with the exception of one prisoner who lost fortitude and confessed repentance, the Girondins defended themselves boldly. Brissot and Vergniaud rivalled a Danton at bay. The Prosecutor appealed to the Convention for a law that should free the Tribunal from formalities disturbing the minds and the consciences of jurymen,



giving them the right to make end to prolonged defence. Hébert asked if so many ceremonies were needful to be done with scoundrels already judged by the people. Robespierre moved that a President of a Tribunal, after three days' discussion, might ask a jury if their consciences were sufficiently enlightened, otherwise trial would continue. This was decreed, the Tribunal duly instructed. The jury professed themselves content, and spoke for a death sentence. Girondins shouted "*Vive la République!*" Vergniaud, composed, disdainful, felt the trembling of his neighbour Valazé, and asked if he had fear. No, Valazé said, no fear. He was dying. He had stabbed himself. A few hours after, Sanson decapitated that corpse, and a score of men, who sang the *Marseillaise* as they awaited their turn for the knife, if Lamartine spoke truth. Madame Roland wrote her *Memoirs* in prison, followed her colleagues and adorers. She was great in her dignity and courage at that last moment. Roland had news of her death. He went from his lair in Rouen, walked to the country. At night, during storm, he killed himself with a sword-cane. Ex-Mayor Bailly went to the guillotine. Gaudet and Salles were captured and guillotined at Bordeaux. Barbaroux, Pétion and Buzot, wandering together in their wretchedness, thought they were discovered. They broke company, tried to kill themselves. Barbaroux had shot half his face away. He was taken yet alive and conscious, guillotined at Bordeaux. The bodies of Pétion and Buzot were found in a meadow, gnawed by dogs. Others drowned or stabbed themselves.

Condorcet could not recover his stoicism, frantic with grief and despair; could not work steadily at his *Tableau historique*. And he was weary of life, his earlier dreams now bloody nightmares, the hope for the perfectibility of man submerged in thought of his friends, his divorced wife, his daughter. A reign of terror obscured reigns of virtue and justice. He told

Madame Vernet he must go from her, or she too might die at the guillotine. He was an outlaw. She said that men could put him out of law, could not put him out of humanity. He must stay. And stay he did, for a while, apparently quiet, thoughtful. In the luminous, the last paragraph of his fragmentary book, he consoled himself for errors and crimes and injustice with a picture of the human race liberated from its fetters by education, withdrawn from the empire of chance, from enemies to progress, and walking with firm and confident step in the way of truth, virtue, happiness. Such contemplation, he wrote, and tried to believe, was a refuge where the memory of his persecutors could not trail after him: he could forget base fear, envy, greed, in view of an Elysium known to him, created by reason and a love of humanity.

In the spring, 1794, he sent a message to his daughter, *Avis d'un proscrit à sa fille*, instructing her as to her future, anxious that she should be trained to love equality and liberty and to grow in republican morals and virtue, free from all sentiments of a personal vengeance; he addressed tender words to his former wife, confessed his deep gratitude to the dauntless Madame Vernet, not ready further to imperil her, unable to bear the suspense in her house. At ten o'clock one morning he used guile, fled again, partly disguised by a workman's blouse and woollen cap.

He had never been physically robust, and his nine months' concealment at Madame Vernet's, the unceasing drain on mind and imagination and nerves, had made an invalid of him; consequently, when he reached the house of an old friend in the country, toward evening, he was exhausted. According to one account of these last hours, the friend had gone to Paris and would not return until the next day. Condorcet spent the night in a quarry thereabouts. He injured his leg by a tumble, or a fall of stones. He was a cripple, flayed by the cold, famished. Two

days passed for him in torment. The friend was loath to shelter him, afraid of servants, and that Condorcet's approach to the house had been observed. Condorcet went off again, expected at nightfall, when his friend hoped to have a passport so that he might leave France. Whatsoever the facts, in the afternoon he entered an inn at Clamart, not able to stagger further. The innkeeper was a member of the Commune, familiar with Jacobins; one of whom sat drinking with an acquaintance when Condorcet came on them, no doubt bewildered by pain, fatigue, misery, hunger. He was asked to show his papers. He had no papers, gave a false name. In a little time he stood before the local revolutionary Committee, eight out of twelve having met. They were suspicious. He must be taken to the director of the district at Bourg-la-Reine, Bourg-Égalité now. He could not drag himself on, and made the journey in a cart, with two gendarmes.

They took his few possessions from him, including a pocket Horace, and locked him in a room; saw him in that room on the morrow, dead, his face to the floor, arms pressed to his ribs. Apoplexy, the doctor said. Condorcet may have poisoned himself with a mixture of stramonium and opium, stored in a ring worn since the time when he had foreseen the probability of capture, though no ring was found on him nor yet near to him. They buried him in the Bourg-la-Reine cemetery, and with nothing to say where his bones rested; nothing to mark the grave of the foiled statesman and humanist. Months passed before the corpse was known to be Condorcet's.

## VI

In the autumn of 1791, a German, Reinhard, had travelled to Paris with a group of young men, deputies elected to the Legislative Assembly and on their way

to take office, brimful of hope, eager, self-confident; and they had enraptured the German, who envied a country with such men for governors; and he became a Frenchman, an ambassador, a minister. Those eloquent young men, Girondins, were devoid of mean cares, endowed with moral and intellectual courage, as many of their colleagues; and they idolised their own virtue and prejudice and lacked the capacity straightway to grapple with ugly facts, though ambitious for power, at times more truculent with fellow-radicals become censorious than with downright enemies. They were as suspicious of the Jacobins, with whom at first they worked to a common end, as of declared counter-revolutionaries. Until the hubbub between the Gironde and the Mountain over centralisation and the hegemony of Paris, there were but few differences to characterise the two political schools, though the suggestion that many of the Girondins, with their gay and philosophic scepticism, were Voltairians, the Montagnards disciples of Rousseau, was not altogether fanciful; and indubitably the Girondins were less democratic, fighting for their own middle-class as disgust with Sansculottes and insurgent mobs increased. Personal jealousies, literary vanities and animosities, and divergences among themselves, helped to narrow their vision and entangled them fatally toward the end of their legislative days. They were largely responsible for the declaration of war on Europe, for decrees granting protection to peoples, and imposing the revolutionary dictatorship of France; and in their political idealism they recoiled from the ruthless logic of war when measures for public safety made end to liberty. Their hesitations at decisive moments damaged them grievously; yet they had not opposed all stern legislation, and even Condorcet, while earnest to abolish death-penalties for private crimes, had agreed that they should be kept for political offences, though applied seldom and with the utmost scruple.

Condorcet was blamed in his lifetime, and after, by aristocrats who called him a renegade, and by democrats who refused to see anything in him but a pedantic academician strayed from his professorial brethren and making himself ridiculous in politics. He stood for social justice and a universal fraternity, believed in perfection, schooled himself to that romantic and remote end, and wanted to educate and to convert the world. Only a few years passed before French politicians were saying that the desire for perfection was one of the worst maladies that could afflict the human mind; but Condorcet would no doubt have answered that such a confession told one more about the critics than about the ideal criticised. He aimed for a political system, a philosophy scientific and positive, that would respond to all spiritual cravings and advance all the intellectual faculties of man; and freedom was more precious to him than equality, and all violent and eruptive changes were repugnant to him, hence his detestation of Marat. He refused to be cozened by talk of the will of God, and he deified the reasoning will of man, establishing reason as the only true measure of all things, and progress as the new religion. He wished to emancipate men for thought rather than for action, like Socrates; but he had to fend in a most imperfect world, and did not realise that action might be more imperative than thought at times of national crisis. He suffered the galling fate of metaphysicians immersed in public affairs and with philosophy as life-belt, or of poets confronted with the active realities of life; which fact, he might have replied, would be more discreditable to public affairs than to philosophy and poetry when the animal in man ceased to prey on the thinker.

The Revolution outstepped Condorcet and the Girondins; and in his rare moods of despair he perchance fancied, with Burke, that among a people generally corrupt, liberty could nowise exist. Though

there were men like Hébert to confute social optimists, yet Condorcet misjudged the political situation of 1793 and, with the Girondins, failed in statesmanship; and he vexed politicians less fastidious than himself who saw France on fire, meant to quench the flames, and had neither the time nor the will to deal in abstractions or to consider the perfectibility of man; but in his evolutionary faith and gospel, sustained and comprehensive, he held to a conviction of the inevitable and universal betterment, and his last writings, sound or unsound historically and psychologically, were noble. He disciplined himself unsparingly; for behind the calm and sometimes rigid exterior there were acute fears and hidden passions. D'Alembert, who knew Condorcet intimately as a young man, said he was a volcano covered with snow; yet he seldom acted from hot impulse or in haste or fright; and his restraint irritated his contemporaries and served to weaken his influence at a time when everything seemed to need emphasis. Excess in Condorcet was mental, his truth and intensity spiritual, too subtle to be understood by militant democrats and suffering crowds ardent in their ignorance and destitution; and so his high rich qualities often passed unnoticed, or were translated into vices.

His mentality led him to science and philosophy, his heart to social reform, his politics to death; and he gave his whole life ungrudgingly and devotedly to what appeared to him as the manly and proper service of humanity. Meanwhile Englishmen might continue to regard this heroic failure with some dubiety; for in the narrowness of his particular vision he roundly hated Cromwell, and said he could not expect anything hopeful from Necker, because Necker thought the tragedies of Shakespeare were masterpieces.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE EXECUTION OF THE QUEEN

IN the spring of 1793, the Extraordinary Criminal Tribunal began its labours, and, under the name of Revolutionary Tribunal, soon became one of the busiest institutions of government, though death sentences were not yet frequent, averaging about one every two days, increasing slowly as war developed. A few days before the Girondins were brought to their judges, when the great political trials were exciting Paris, Marie-Antoinette died on the scaffold. After August 10, in the preceding year, she had been imprisoned at the Temple with Louis and their family. Her sufferings in those latter months, her behaviour as a woman after her crass follies as a Queen, almost redeemed her. The cruelty of a sentence condemning her to the guillotine when she might have been sent from France, with penalties if she returned, won the sympathy of the world for her; yet the slaughter of a helpless, sad woman made frantic was perhaps less astonishing at that moment than the fact that she did not perish under the claws of the mob at Versailles in October, 1789. The people regarded her as nearly the worst Queen ever country had endured, though the evil of her reign could not be attributed to her so much as to her upbringing, the disposition of events, the craft of her preceptors, the knavery of her associates. Throughout her life at the French Court she was an Austrian rather than a naturalised Frenchwoman, an agent and often a witless spy of the hereditary French enemy; an inveterate enemy herself in the opinion of many French people, living symbol of an Austrian alliance that violated French traditions and, folk said, must ruin the land. England and Prussia had damaged



MARIE ANTOINETTE  
*By Vigée-Lebrun (Versailles)*





## EXECUTION OF THE QUEEN

the military and naval renown of France, had clipped her empire during the Seven Years' War; yet those powers were not so abhorrent to most Frenchmen as the subtly-cunning and perfidious Austrian ally.

Marie-Thérèse, mother to Marie-Antoinette, had numerous progeny and was more the tender woman than the Empress with them until they reached nubility; and then the mother gave way to the shrewd politician, and her offspring were so many pawns to be used by Empress and ministers in the complex, plundering schemes devised by Austria for the embroilment of European diplomacy. Marie-Antoinette left Vienna, and her mother, did not see one or the other again, and journeyed to the Court of Louis XV, there to seal a Franco-Austrian compact, marrying the Dauphin, he being fifteen, she fourteen; and they were King and Queen on the death of his grandfather four years after. Louis' dour and unamiable aunts, his brother the Comte de Provence, his two sisters-in-law, despised her and were encouraged by all who looked with disfavour or fear on that Austrian alliance. She made herself the sparkling centre of the Austrian faction, and gave enmity for enmity in her strained relations with the rest of the Court, soon neglected by her ponderous youth of a royal spouse, the virtuous and phlegmatic Louis; who preferred his banal amusements and rural squiredom to the artificial and ornate ceremonies of a Court; nor could he understand this frivolous, vain girl planted on him. He was afraid of her sharp tongue, her talent for mockery, and did not consummate the marriage till seven years had passed, and for various reasons. Louis was indifferent to the charm of his wife, baffled by her, suffering from her follies and extravagance; so until the dawn of the Revolution, when he sinned in an opposite extreme, submissive, uxorious, yet always a little afraid of her.

She had instruction from Vienna, in correspondence with her mother, and was obedient as a rule to the

skilled and unscrupulous Mercy, Austrian ambassador at the French Court; and her duty, the business of her life, as she wrote, induced her to defer to Austrian interests, to influence Louis so that Austrian agents should have place in French administration, to inform the Austrian government of all that happened at the French Court, and, under dictation, to direct French policy, making it subserve Austrian ends. Whenever she seemed to be neglecting or forgetting those sacred duties, she had reprimand from Vienna, further impressive tutorship from Mercy.

Had Marie-Antoinette possessed the genius of her mother, she might have ensured herself against contumely and been a power in European affairs for good as well as ill; but she had the mentality and the tastes of a flighty Viennese; until the drive of the Revolution made a serious woman of her, twenty years after marriage. She was almost illiterate, having no interest in things cultural, no judgment, tiring at once of earnest talk, stupid in State affairs, and unwilling to amend; not docile, following the caprice of the moment, never impersonal, living at the beck of her juvenile fancies, careless of the morrow, blind to the past. She had faith only in her mother, whom she admired slavishly, tried to obey, and mourned deeply; and she showed her quick vexation when the mistrustful Louis refused to accede to all her importunities in matters of State and did not expose secrets of policy. She thought he must be senseless, or prejudiced by her enemies, when he opposed the notions of Mercy.

As a Queen she was libelled grossly and without stint by Court factions hostile to her, by Press and people; and her love of coquetry and boisterous imprudences, her mania for public balls, masked pleasure parties, theatricals, giddy routs pursued all night while Louis snored in his bed, shocked French people, who might laugh at the eighteenth-century gallantries and

absurdities on the part of nobles and courtiers, but were revolted to see and to hear of their Queen's addiction to such corrupting moonshine. Her prodigalities, her licence at gaming-tables, were monstrous at a time when France drew near to bankruptcy; for only the strumpets of Kings and never the wives had given themselves freely to that sort of dissipation hitherto. She contracted debts, heavily embarrassed again and again. Mercy examined her accounts and found that she owed nearly half-a-million *livres*. Secrets of that kind could not be kept at the slanderous French Court, and folk said the Queen's debts were paid by the finance minister; an untruth, though the State had to pay indirectly, for Louis saved her from his royal purse, and more than once. She was familiar with men like the Duc de Lauzun, therefore indiscreet to a pitch of lunacy, perhaps not inherently vicious; and she had a lover in Fersen; yet here also she may have been guilty of no more than an emotional infidelity to the King, though her passion for the Swedish colonel lasted to the end.

She caballed against the King's ministers and for her own usually worthless favourites, abundantly generous to her acquaintance, provoking further scandal; and she had part in the resignation of the wise Malesherbes, in the dismissal of the yet more wise Turgot, annoyed by his severity and probity, fancying she had been affronted personally, hankering to send him to the Bastille. She was the dupe of her own unwisdom, and the malice and guile of creatures she trusted; as harmful to genuine French interests as a Madame de Pompadour. Had Marie-Antoinette been a commoner, she might have served as the pretty heroine of an amusing social comedy; but she was a Queen ignoring the honourable high duties of her position, until the time had passed when she could gain the esteem of thoughtful subjects who wanted to be loyal. The scabrous affair of the Necklace, when La Motte per-

sued the infatuate Cardinal de Rohan that he might win the Queen's favour by helping her to buy diamonds, and cheated him and the jewellers, damned Marie-Antoinette, blameless here; for though the poor adventurous La Motte had to take punishment, the Courts acquitted the Cardinal; and the Parisians impugned the Queen, insulting her publicly. Thereafter she kept from the city, afraid of demonstrations.

These facts, and many fictions, and the scurrilous gossip of anti-Austrian courtiers, and others, had created an overwhelming savage prejudice against the unfortunate woman by the time of the Revolution. She hated and dreaded revolution, the democrats, the Constitution, and said she would prefer to risk all possible dangers rather than continue to live in such a state of misery and degradation; and she had no understanding of the people, the soldiery, the revolutionary spirit, and supposed that if Austrian troops advanced into France the people would yield, their insolence, she thought, arising solely from an excess of fright. Her wild and futile efforts to save herself, her husband, her family, yet further enraged opinion against her, and after being known as *Madame D'Éficit* she became *Madame Veto*, the Austrian arch-enemy of France, royalist foe to liberty and equality.

Her conspiracy to promote an invasion of France was suspected, at length assumed, and only an escape from the country might have saved her after August 10. In her pathetic ignorance and equivocation and her desperate attempts at statesmanship, she presumed for a while that if the *émigrés* could be restrained and their designs erased from the European programme, foreign intervention would prevent civil war and restore the loyalty of all good citizens. She loathed the *émigrés* as she loathed the Sansculottes; for they were ready to sacrifice Louis to their own interest and ancient privilege, insulted him and his Queen, and by their threats, proclamations, their noisy insistence on

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the complete abolition of anything constitutional, on the merciless punishment of anyone who had taken profit from the Revolution, they disgusted the Allies, fostered revolution in France, and ruined Louis' ingenuous early plans for armed amelioration. Of the many ironies, not the least was the fact that a majority in France believed Louis and Marie-Antoinette were fervid accomplices of the *émigrés*; whom the people of France held in horror, because they stood for the reimposition of all that had been annulled in 1789. Marie-Antoinette had shown her courage and a development of character during the crises of the Revolution, more forceful and less unsagacious than Louis in his abnegation, though she deceived Mirabeau, Barnave, the men who would help her; and development continued through the last tormenting months. Her devotion to Louis and to her children dignified and exalted her.

They were imprisoned in a tower of the Temple, once the property of the Comte d'Artois. The Queen and the Dauphin, and her daughter, occupied two spacious rooms on the second floor, Louis having an apartment above, Madame Elisabeth below; and at first the royal family had a Princess, a Duchess, and a dozen servants to wait on them. Soon after their arrival, however, the *Procureur* of the Commune raised objection at the Hôtel de Ville, saying there was nothing in the world so embarrassing as a royal family and its flunkies, who ought to be swept away: he had offered to provide the Queen with women chosen by himself, and she had answered haughtily that she needed only the King's sister. Six days later, the royal servants were sent away, the Princess and the Duchess to prison. Louis and his brood had been treated like Princes, having their twenty courses at a meal, if they wanted them, as he did, much wine for him, furniture at request, books from the library. Now their royal privileges were reduced and they lived under constant

supervision, and with a valet for Louis, one for the Dauphin, and a man and his wife as gaolers, and spies. The prisoners might walk in the gardens, mingle as a family, get what news they could from friendly warders.

Louis went to execution. Marie-Antoinette was stricken, afraid, yet hopeful that she might be exiled, not murdered. Her young boy was taken from her and guarded by instructors; not ill-treated, until Dauphins also became an embarrassment to revolutionary France; and he sickened and died, less than two years after his mother, if official accounts were true. Marie-Antoinette's sorrows bowed her low, her apprehensions for her son maddened her. Plots to effect her escape failed, and yet again; likewise Danton's attempt to save her in negotiation with Austria; indeed Austria seemed ready to sacrifice her in order that her death might further excite Europe against France. She was taken to the Conciergerie, deprived of her daughter and Madame Elisabeth, and watched day and night, with the prison-porter's wife and a girl for attendants, two gendarmes for immediate guard. She spent the mornings at her toilet, having an ample wardrobe allowed to her; and food in plenty, many delicacies, though vexed and affronted by surveillance in her apartment. Her health began to fail, her woes and despair increased each day. She would sit in a languid quiet, brows twitching, lips quivering as she watched the guard play cards; or she might read a little. When the porter's wife brought her small boy, Marie-Antoinette revived, and played with him; wept at sight of him presently, spoke of the Dauphin; and his visits ceased, the porter's wife having decided that her boon to the prisoner had become an additional pain.

As the allied armies approached, demands for the trial of the Queen were loud and insistent, and as an indirect reprisal against Austrians who were treating imprisoned French emissaries brutally. The death of

*Capet* had been the affair of the Convention; the death of *Widow Capet*, folk said, would be the affair of Paris, the Tribunal, the revolutionary-army. Hébert had promised the people that she should die; and if there were delays, he wrote, he himself would go and take that head. Further disastrous news from the war-fronts intensified hatred of Marie-Antoinette. On a night in October she was led through narrow dark passages to a large hall lit by two candles. The interrogation took place in oppressive twilight. She sat between gendarmes, answering No to the charges, saying she wished well to France, numbed in her heroic sadness. She signed the papers as *Widow Capet*, heard that she might have lawyers to defend her, went back to the cell.

Burke had seen her at Versailles years before, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she had begun to move in, he said; glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy. And now she was forsaken, harried almost to death, about to be judged for hostility to a country she had been called to Queen. The grief and pain, the sore lassitude and blank misery in and on her recently, was hidden at her trial. She faced the court bravely. The examination went on from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon, from five till midnight; began again at nine, concluded at three. Most of the time she sat very still, her hands resting on the rail in front of her, her glance fixed on her judges. She was accused of a ruinous extravagance, of sending money to support war on France: she had conspired with the man called the King of Bohemia and Hungary, had incited her husband *Capet* to his crimes against the land. . . . Many of the charges were true. She gave a quiet denial to each in turn, did not falter at a parade of witnesses. Then Hébert came. He and a few men similar to himself had questioned that lad of eight, the Dauphin, extracting terrified, senseless affirmations



from him. Hébert charged Marie-Antoinette with abominations against her son. One of the judges exerted himself to hurry on. He was ashamed. A juryman pressed the Queen. She would not answer. Then she rose. In a loud voice she appealed to every mother in the court. Many of those women longed for her death. Now they muttered in sympathy. Hébert's foul stuff did not spurt from his own brain. La Marck, the Queen's friend, said that the unnamable accusations of the Revolutionary Tribunal had origin in the libels and lies spread by aristocrats. The royalists had been the first to insult the King with the derisory name of *Capet*. They were the first to befoul the domestic reputation of the Queen, to dehumanise her in the minds of French people. The blustering Hébert did not stand alone in depravity and spite.

On the night of the first day she was exhausted, slept heavily, having that last respite. The next day she was firm, declaring her innocence in the miserable fraud of the Diamond Necklace. There at least she spoke truth. She was nearly blind with fatigue. She could not see when they helped her to her cell. She returned to the court, shook her head when asked if she had anything to say, left finally. She wrote to her sister-in-law, in a clear hand, declaring her innocence. Then she lay down, staring at the window, crying a little, softly, to herself. Members of the Tribunal came to read the death sentence. She recoiled when the executioner had to make ready, bound her wrists, grasped her hair to cut it. She thought he meant to kill her then, and cried out. A ramshackle muddy cart, drawn by an old white horse, took her to the guillotine. She sat on a plank, face white and drawn, eyes red, one of them sightless, hands fastened, the ends of her shorn hair straggling from beneath her linen cap, mouth open, the under-lip trembling visibly. David sketched her as she passed on.

She would not listen to the juring-priest who

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accompanied her. She seemed deaf to the crowd, to howls at the Austrian, jeers, imprecations. She recoiled once more, in sight of the guillotine. She left the cart, followed by Sanson. He held the cord attached to her wrists. She climbed again, refusing help. Now she lay bound on an adjustable plank. Her head rolled from the trunk, and was shown to the crowd. They cheered. "*Vive la République!*" Her body went to the cemetery and was neglected for days.

On November 1, 1793, about a fortnight after the execution, a grave-digger, having made a hole near to the grave of Louis and buried Marie-Antoinette, sent his account to the authorities: "*La veuve Capet, pour la bière, 6 livres; pour la fosse et les fossoyeurs, 15 livres, 35.*"

## CHAPTER VIII

### CARNOT; AND THE ARMIES OF THE REVOLUTION

#### I

THE machinery of the period known dramatically as the Reign of Terror did not prevent invaluable legislative work and schemes for education, civil expansion, economic reform; but the might and the vanity of France lay in her armies, in a miracle of labour for which three or four members of the *Comité de Salut public*, and pre-eminently Carnot, the organiser of victory with his devouring activity, were largely responsible. Virtue was in the armies, animating the volunteers and conscripts; men who worshipped the Republic and were content to die rather than to suffer invasion. Few incorrigible factions here, little to soil an impassioned, romantic faith in liberty, equality, fraternity, and the ennobling mission of the Revolution to found social justice in France and Europe and to establish a real democracy. And those men had the *Marseillaise*, a hymn worth ten armies, Napoleon said; and they sang it in attack, sang it in retreat, inspiring new attack; sang it to cheer themselves when famished, bedraggled, unshod; sang it as they trudged through villages and towns, indifferent to peril, joking at wounds and death, enduring as no other men of the time, proud of themselves, immeasurably proud of their Revolution. Meanwhile Carnot pored over his maps, working seventeen hours a day, sped to this and that frontier, returning to the Committee, ignoring the politicians when they wished to interfere with him; and so there were victories for France, after the days of panic and defeat.

Carnot stood high among the great republicans of



CARNOT  
By Boilly



history, not surpassed as a war-administrator. He was saved at the outset when Dumouriez hoped to bargain with the enemy, planned to lead his army against France, like a La Fayette, though more subtle, less scrupulous and honourable than he, and the executive sent the war minister and four deputies to arrest him. Dumouriez arrested them, handing them to a Saxon general; and they spent years in foreign prisons. Carnot had been appointed as a fifth commissioner. He was busy elsewhere, tried and failed to join his fellows; and so escaped Dumouriez's trap. Several times in his adventurous long life he barely avoided prison, death. He lay in the Bastille for a while, was twice proscribed, went into exile as an old man; and his spirit, his republican faith and courage, never forsook him.

He was a Burgundian, born at Nolay in 1753, his father a notary of the town, solid, much respected, warm at heart, wise in his affairs, making a cult of lineage, convinced, as his sons after him, that he could take profit and example from family history, reverencing the duties imposed by honourable birth. Carnot, worthy son of that worthy good man, had paternal instruction until he went to college at Autun, in his thirteenth year, familiar with Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte, his fellow-pupils. Two years after, he moved to a seminary to learn his classics, thence to a military academy at Paris. Here he turned finally from the Catholicism instilled in him by his gentle, hopeful mother, reacting against all dogmatic religion, though steady in moral principle, earnest at his studies, already a worker, constant, fearless, straight-forward, attracting notice and praise; and he advanced to the École de Mézières, now a second-lieutenant; left in 1773, fully graded as an engineer. Ten years later he took his captaincy, and after much close study of things other than guns, fortifications, mines and trenches.

Carnot, strong in will, thoughtful, calm, was

thoroughly human, unspoiled by excess of sensibility; and he fancied he would have much to say to the world, he too having steeped himself in the ideas and visions of his day, though his first writings dealt with aeronautics and mathematics, preceding a prize-essay, *Éloge de Vauban*. Vauban, like Carnot a military engineer, an intrepid thinker ahead of his age, had developed theories for the defence of civilisation and humanity as well as for the kingdom of his master, Louis XIV. Carnot wrote that Vauban believed governments ought to establish an equilibrium between citizens, preventing the frightful misery of a majority, the brazen opulence of others, the odious multiplicity of a privilege that condemned the people to indigence and shame. Carnot stated his own convictions, and saw them glorified in Vauban, made Vauban his ideal citizen, the heroic model as a man, a soldier, a statesman. Frederick the Great's brother Henry met Carnot in France about that time, divined his capacity and invited him to Prussia, tempting him with generous offers for service; but Carnot's patriotism equalled his liberalism and he refused to leave the country.

A *lettre de cachet* haled him to the Bastille, the pretext being an unauthorised absence from duty with the troops. Carnot loved a Dijon woman of noble birth. Her parents broke pledge with him, and on behalf of an infantry officer well provisioned. Carnot left Arras, his station, intending to fight the rival, and so gave opportunity to chiefs irritated as much by his political views as by his unorthodox notions in strategy and fortification; and they seized occasion to suppress this critical young militarist, the abandoned lover. Prince Henry, anxious to visit the fortresses of the north, wanted a competent guide; and Carnot had few rivals here, responsible for the maps of the region. The war minister in his wisdom demanded Carnot's release, and sent him with the Prince. Carnot was not the man to forget the indignity of prison, the

crime of *lettres de cachet*, and the incident served yet further to ripen him for 1789; nor would he allow the established rules of military discipline and his rank to bridle tongue and pen when the States General met and the Revolution began. He resented the doctrine of passive military obedience, advocating the right of soldiers to protest, except at a time of actual war; for all men were citizens, in or out of the army, therefore entitled to the prerogative of citizenship.

He added to his polemical writings, and his theories of fortification and strategy in opposition to the tedious old school, and progressed in democracy, arguing that nations had part in a universal brotherhood and all offensive wars were disastrous and foul, the outcome of damnable ambition and a lust for conquest; in fact he wrote like an internationalist, and sometimes thought like a pacifist, denouncing the brutality and moral and material corruption of war, predicting an era of universal peace, a family of nations welded in equality and freedom, the result of the Revolution, the end of all tyranny and bondage. He defended the soldiers who had share in the Nancy mutiny and were smitten by Bouillé; decried the policy of La Fayette and the executive; and he said the flight to Varennes must be regarded as abdication, that France ought forthwith to become a Republic.

He was married now, living at Arras, locally famous for his revolutionary brusque zeal, admired for his rectitude and energy as a would-be military and political reformer; and he went to the Legislative Assembly, deputy for the Pas de Calais, a stout republican, knowing precisely what he wanted, narrow in his views as a statesman though never equivocal; determined, acquisitive, impatient to outface rogues and fools.



## II

His first speech in the new Assembly startled the deputies, who did not understand him and said he spoke treason. He proposed that all the citadels of France should be levelled to the earth. Deputies knew nothing of his fortification theories, reviled him, would not allow him to explain. He went to his lodging, unruffled, sure of himself, wrote a memoir, had it set in type, distributed to his colleagues the next day. The memoir expressed astonishment that a proposal to destroy Bastilles should have had such a reception in revolutionary France. He had spent twenty-one years in military engineering; he was not blind. Let deputies know that Bastilles facing the interior of towns could be used against such towns, and were monstrous in a free country. He accounted for his remarks as a sound strategist and a good citizen, and confessed he was a soldier, spoke little, did not belong to any faction. There were no further misunderstandings of Carnot and his patriotism; and soon he was elected to the Diplomatic, the Public Instruction committees, then to the Military committee, his rightful place, as those deputies learned presently; as Europe had to learn.

He resisted war-minister Narbonne, who wanted to enforce absolute and passive obedience in the armies. Carnot upheld his theory of a reasoned obedience, save in face of the enemy, citing the dark games of military chiefs, of a Bouillé, proven renegades foiled by the resistance of their underlings. A soldier was a man, not a machine, he repeated, and must use his wits against leaders who manifestly outraged a true loyalty to the nation. He decided the Assembly to arm National Guards with pikes when muskets failed and the events of August 10 were in preparation, for pikes could be made rapidly and in large numbers; and by a judicious mingling of men so armed with a

minority having muskets, he gave force to corps otherwise weak. He had his part in cleansing the army of traitorous officers, showed himself prompt and firm in relation to King, Court, *émigrés*. The nation meant to have its Constitution, he told the Assembly, and would not brook intimidation, threats of invasion, or the oblique villainies of reactionaries and adversaries at home. French Princes who put themselves at the head of rebellious troops were culpable; whoever left the mother-country and trafficked with foes could not be punished too severely; the *émigrés* had forfeited the high name of Frenchmen. Now he thought that war and only war could stabilise a Revolution about to be attacked by voracious foreigners. He was a soldier; and he never tired of saying that France must affirm a right to govern and to defend herself.

Early in 1791, the French army, the old royalist army of volunteers and militia drafts, was rotted with discontent, ill-equipped in all units, except the artillery, and numbered only sixty thousand effectives; and within a few months two-thirds of the officers had emigrated. Europe, vigilant and contemptuous, rejoiced to see France in dissolution and unable to shield herself; and in the spring of the previous year, when the National Assembly had repudiated wars and conquests, Europe had already considered France as another Poland, helpless though loquacious, fit for spoliation, entangled in fine phrases, impotent to resist facts. The French executive could appraise the attitude of the powers, and their designs; and eventually they called for two hundred thousand volunteers, who were promised fifteen *sous* a day and should have the right to elect their own chiefs. About a hundred thousand young men responded. One of them, in the emotional rhetoric of the day, apostrophised those months of patriotism, glory, sublime impulse, the most magnificent spectacle ever offered by any nation to the world! Rhetoric and enthusiasm, however, did not alone

suffice to reduce the peril of confused organisation, poor equipment, divided counsels, ill-training; and though the volunteers, and the non-commissioned officers of the old army, made the prelude to years of battle and victory, they were not yet able to face the Austrians on the Belgian frontier, the famous Imperial Army; and there they shot their own general, and no enemies, cavalry having wheeled in sudden dread on the supporting infantry. Thus utter rout, cries of betrayal, of *sauve qui peut!* and flight to Lille. The Austrians were amused, over-confident from that day, did not trouble at once to attack Lille and Valenciennes, resting before further operations and the supposed downfall of France, with bounteous spoil as a recompense for invaders.

Paris also shouted "Betrayal!" The Assembly pronounced their Country-in-danger decree, and called for new battalions. Carnot was sent to Lille to do what he could; and he did much, strengthening the fortifications, trying to restore discipline. He forbore to mention punishments, quiet in his habitual self-possession, reasoning with the men: they had been duped by clownish terror, he said, victims of their own feebleness. He left a repentant army, went back to Paris to report.

Brunswick's manifesto with its promise of extermination, Saint-Cyr wrote, gave a hundred battalions to the defence; and assuredly it helped to raise the troops of 1792, impromptu recruiting stations draped with tri-colour flags having been established in streets crowded with young men as eager to run to the colours as the raw youths at Lille to run from Austrians. Old generals had retired, or had disappeared; La Fayette was about to cross the frontier; but new generals were on parade, Dumouriez, Custine, Kellermann, Kléber. And in those armies of 1792 there were young soldiers of fortune, many of them hitherto unknown non-commissioned officers; Hoche, Marceau,

Victor, Jourdan, Murat, Ney, Soult, Bernadotte and others who were to become generals, Princes, Dukes, Kings; who would lard history with their achievements under Bonaparte, he too a young soldier in search of fortune at that hour.

Danton took the executive command, stoked the fires, diffusing his influence through France; and now the peasants joined the recruiting movement and hurried to enrol themselves. Carnot set off again, this time for the Rhine Army, to announce the end of monarchy, to administer the civic oath, to deal with any resistance from officers unready to accept the second revolution; and he returned to Paris, ill with fatigue, and thankful to have escaped any share by inference or directly in the September Massacres.

He was elected to the National Convention, left Paris with two subordinates for the Bayonne district near to the Spanish frontier, found that army in decay. Fortifications had been abandoned, anarchy simmered against the arbitrary follies of authority; and in a little time he promoted order, reassured the people, consolidating them in defence of their own lands, and could return to Paris; a Paris now hysterical after the success at Valmy, and the centre of a nation arming itself to protect its new and precious rights.

Dumouriez had command of the Northern Army, with Kellermann at Metz, and they struggled to establish order as recruits untrained for war rolled in day by day, noisy in their enthusiasm, restive under discipline. The generals took advantage of the sloth of their enemies, drilled and harangued the citizen-soldiers, gaining some control; and they devised the *amalgame*, a cautious mingling of unfleshed squads with old battalions; a practice at once effective, and decreed by the Convention months later. The Austrians had at last besieged Lille and were resisted by the men who had lately fled from them. The Prussians captured Longwy, then Verdun, forcing the

passages of the Argonne; and seemingly they had an open road to Paris. Dumouriez, outflanked, only saved himself by his audacity and usual calm. He sent for Kellermann, who hastened from Metz and joined him in the neighbourhood of St Ménéhould. Brunswick, with his men and guns, urged by the Prussian King, expected to cut French communications, outflanking Dumouriez again. On September 20, he ordered troops to occupy the Châlons road. Dumouriez sent Kellermann to the Valmy plateau, took position with his reserves behind the hills.

The morning broke wet and foggy, cleared before noon. The armies were in sight of each other. The Prussians had imagined they would meet a ragged mob who must run immediately they were endangered. They faced an army deployed in good order on the plateau, awaiting the attack. Kellermann rode in front of his men, flourishing hat and sword, shouting his "*Vive la Nation!*" They cheered and sang their *Marseillaise*. An explosion of ammunition-waggons frightened them. They wavered, in confusion, recovered quickly. The Prussians were amazed, halting half-way in their advance; and for some or other obscure reason they did not attack. A severe cannonade blew men to pieces, lasting several hours. A heavy rainstorm in the evening swamped the dregs of zeal from the Allies. The battle, or, rather, the cannonade with skirmishes, ended in a moral gain for the French. They had stood their ground because they were not attacked, and now thought themselves invincible. The Prussians, the few Austrians, the *émigrés*, had tasted republican fire, and had lost some of their illusions in consequence.

After armistice of a sort, parleyings, skilful trickery on the part of Dumouriez, Brunswick began to retreat through endless deep mud and foul weather, cajoled by the diplomacy of Danton's agents, who aimed for a Prussian alliance; harassed by the peasants, watched

though unmolested by Kellermann; and Prussian troops floundered, heart-sick and starving, plagued with dysentery, cursing the Austrians; a perambulating hospital dragging itself on and leaving dead and dying behind.

Brunswick had shown no liking for his task as commander-in-chief, having some notion of and a furtive sympathy with the constitutional ideas of the French Revolution; and he could neither square with himself nor with his fellows, nauseated at the antipathies, conflicting interests and rivalries disorganising invasion so that no agreed plan was feasible, no unity attainable; nothing cordial here, though much greed for indemnities, compensation, allies being suspicious of each other, scattering blame for disaster. Catherine of Russia had encouraged them, railing at the French who dared to affront monarchy; and simultaneously she incited her own troops under the redoubtable Suvóroff to kill Poles and to annihilate monarchists before a second dismemberment of Poland; when Austrians and Prussians would squabble with Russians, and each other, for a share, having failed to carve France.

Marie-Antoinette's sister, the Queen of Naples, scolded like a Catherine, meanwhile shaming herself and King Ferdinand in her infatuation for Lady Hamilton; Spain was not yet officially at war, and the Spanish Queen, another virago having a nominal part in the crusade against democrats, played trull to the adventurer Godoy, and made a virtual King of him. The Swiss were neutral, uneasy, doubtful; the Swedes, after the death of Gustavus, neutral and mercenary; and most of the German Princes, for whose feudal rights the Allies were supposed among other items to be fighting, were scared alike of friends and enemies, and hovered, neither at war nor peace. The concert of powers filled Europe with ugly harsh discords, inapt to sound harmonies; and the *émigrés*, threatening and pillaging when they could, withdrew from France,

so many buffeted vagabonds, as embarrassing and vexatious to their allies as they were hateful to their own countrymen; and this after having promised a general uprising in their favour on the march to Paris. England looked on, preparing to help with the fleet, and subsidies, when she too would share in the militant cacophony. Hence the forces of Europe were crippled in the strife with a single, united nation, a people exalted by a new faith; but Europe had power enough to spread death before concert number One fell into a relative short quiet.

The French armies had given a preliminary demonstration of their mettle, had freed the land from invasion; and within a few weeks Dumouriez won the battle of Jemappes, near to Mons, against Austrians; the first big victory. He conquered the Austrian Netherlands, took possession of Belgium. The Southern Army had beaten the Piedmontese, annexing Savoy and Nice. Custine on the Rhine planted the Revolution flag over Frankfort and Mainz. France had ceased to be on the defensive, took the offensive; and she had to pay sorely before Carnot organised victory from the *Comité de Salut public*.

### III

France offered to help all nations to freedom, and Carnot voiced the sentiment in a report. The honour of the country, he said, engaged itself to protect the liberty of all countries who wished to conquer liberty, though such countries must remain absolute masters of their own affairs, France having no intention of forcing laws on anyone. The patriots of Belgium gave welcome to Dumouriez under the assumption that he represented this generous, bold French charter and would consummate their revolt against Austrian rule; but union soon revealed itself in less amiable colours and there were low projects, demands for

supplies, France having chosen to follow tradition and to pay for her wars from the exchequers of the countries she professed to liberate. Belgium resisted, cruelties and troubles ensued; and Dumouriez's hopes in that country, and in Holland, were ruined after his crushing defeat at Neerwinden. He hesitated between the rôle of a soldier faithful to the Revolution and a political adventurer scheming for the restoration of French monarchy and his own dictatorship; and he betrayed France. Carnot escaped arrest by Dumouriez, and thought the general's defection might now cure Frenchmen of their inveterate idolatries; and he had to battle with a new and alarming situation when Dumouriez fled to the enemy, and troops so far devoted to him were shaken in their revolutionary faith. Carnot issued proclamations, beseeching the men to abjure their recent leader, now a rebel; and he saved that situation by his shrewdness and daring, and his humanity. Then he went to a second perilous zone, with a colleague. The British, now at war, were menacing Dunkirk. Here Carnot reorganised the defences, emboldened the men, led them in attack, saving that situation too, for the moment.

He was recalled from the army of the north, appointed to the new Jacobin *Comité de Salut public*, and began on his greater work; for victory once more seemed impossible to France in the autumn of 1793, and Carnot faced a task formidable enough to overwhelm most men. The Netherlands had been evacuated, the rebels in the Vendée were winning battles; Condé, Valenciennes, Mainz, were lost to France, the Alps threatened, the Spanish advancing through the Pyrenees; Hood was about to occupy Toulon; Lyons revolted, Departments had risen, and the dangers to France were more acute than in the preceding year.

Barère read a report, written by Carnot, announcing that France, invested, would become nothing less than one huge camp, with Paris for arsenal; and under



terrible martial law, he might have added. The Convention decreed that from now until the enemy had been driven out, all Frenchmen were in permanent requisition for national service: the young men would join the armies, the married would deal with munitions and transport; the women could make tentings, clothes, and serve the hospitals, the children turn old linen into bandages, the old men must show themselves in public to excite the courage of the rest and to preach hatred of Kings and the unity of the Republic. Barracks would be established, public buildings turned into workshops, property owners, farmers, corn-factors placed at the disposal of the Committee to make contribution in goods; and representatives of the people would go to the Departments to accelerate the movement in concert with local authorities. The *levée* should be general: unmarried citizens from eighteen to twenty-five would be the first to march to the frontiers; battalions must form in all districts, and with flags having for inscription, *Le peuple français debout contre les tyrans!* France uprisen against tyrants, Carnot said, organising popular fury on a war-footing. Nearly five hundred thousand men were added to the forces, and soon Carnot had over a million troops, fourteen armies, wanting munitions, food, clothes, boots, money. Confiscated *émigré* properties swelled the war-chest, *assignats* were redoubled. Presently the Committee had full powers to commandeer everything and every one, charged with all measures needful to deal with emergencies and to use the impulse and activity of the entire French people. Public enterprise swamped all private enterprise, civil liberties shrivelled in the flame to establish national liberty; and scientists and chemists toiled in the munition-works, forges were set up in the streets, church-bells seized to make cannon, cellars upturned to get saltpetre for powder.

Carnot was a directing force behind this national movement, helped by his representatives on mission,

fearless men like Saint-Just, some of them highly skilled, wise administrators; and he had immediate support from Robert Lindet, a Normandy lawyer, brave, ardent, conciliatory, who told the Committee during the Terror that he had a duty to nourish citizens, not to kill patriots; from Prieur (de la Côte-d'Or), responsible for munitions, taking instruction from his chief; who had to create and furnish resources, always in touch with the armies, controlling the generals, dictating military plans, a great war lord. He slaved at a work-table, studying maps made by himself, busy with compasses and notebooks, devising strategy and campaigns while his fellow-committeemen were in discussion; then, abruptly, he would join in the talk, arrested by a phrase, enlightening an obscurity, giving advice; and he was accountable for the suppression of ministers and had his twelve executive, obedient Commissions. He seldom went to the Convention, as a rule merely to announce an army success, attributing what virtue there might be to the skill of the officers, the courage of the men, the enthusiasm of France; as if he were only an historian. Thus Carnot; in appearance not unlike a Goethe, a Beethoven; tall, dignified, his brow wide and high, furrowed, eyes blue, searching, benevolent in expression, as too the fold of his compressed mouth; and he spoke gravely or sharply, more often kept silence, pondering, wasting no word as he wasted no moment. A man simple and frugal in his habits, faithful to his theory of citizenship, rigid in his probity, impersonal in his ambitions, kindly in his human relationships; yet stern in war, upholding his martial law, irascible on occasion. His home at this time might be said to have been that hitherto royal apartment on the ground-floor of the Pavillon de Flore at the Tuileries, the famous *salle verte* used by the *Comité de Salut public*, approached by a corridor girded with cannon, sacred to its members, and with its crowded, humming ante-chambers, bureaux, offices.

The Committee had three distinct periods: under Danton, with Robespierre, and after Thermidor; and it reached its dictatorial summit and did its mighty work between the summers of 1793 and 1794, when Carnot managed the war, Robespierre watched all things and now and again acted as spokesman at the Convention, reporting on general policy, abetted by Saint-Just when his spirit quailed; and by Couthon, the wiry little fellow paralysed at the legs, shrill in speech, peremptory, not inhuman, and who had to be taken about in a wheeled-chair or carried by a gendarme. Saint-Just scrutinised the police, when in Paris, and he wanted to direct the army, envious of Carnot. Collot d'Herbois, an old actor and dramatist, noisy, theatrical, impudent, sometimes tipsy, or energetic, always ingenious, had charge of the correspondence with men on mission. Billaud-Varenne, a man with a dagger under his tongue, Danton had said, and Collot's friend, more sombre and coldly cruel than he, excited fear on principle, and did good work as an administrator. Jeanbon Saint-André, a former merchant-service captain, sometime protestant pastor, a man upright and alert, superintended the navy, and could make little of it. The chameleon Barère dealt with home affairs, the theatres, vagrancy laws and so on, and had a last word in most arguments, and frequently a potent, shrewd word. Hérault de Séchelles, a brilliant gay epicure, lost the confidence of his brethren, had no important office, after busying himself in diplomacy; and he went to the guillotine with his friend Danton.

The Committee was summarily divided by later critics into two groups, the workers and the politicians; and undoubtedly Carnot, immersed in his war task, refused to spend himself on futilities. In his apologia he said he allowed others to feed the scaffold, and they left him alone to defend France; yet he signed proscriptions, directing martial law, inflexible here, and by political necessity, his humanity in abeyance as

he grappled with national perils, he too flawed with the evil of his age. They had a printing-press in the basement of the Pavillon, and issued orders and instructions, hundreds of them day by day, labouring indefatigably, eating and sleeping when they could, fashioning the new destiny of France, having suspended earlier legislation; in fact they shaped their own at need, masters, autocrats in the heart of a democracy, arguing that peace and war, like health and sickness, called for separate régimes, that as committee men serving in the name of public safety they were exonerated by the most irrefragable of laws, that law of necessity. And the Convention submitted, docile for a time, sure that a centralised Committee and only the Committee could give victory to the soldiers, death to enemies at home; that while invading armies and civil war tore the land, the Committee must have its ferocious way, promulgating laws, quickening subservient committees and the Revolutionary Tribunal, working in conjunction with the *Comité de Sûreté générale*, who controlled the police and proposed judges and jurymen, so that together they had full and undisputed power over all the machinery of war and revolutionary government.

## IV

Before the end of the year, the national movement and Carnot's genius had a dazzling recompense. They must finish, he had said; for another year of war would famish and exhaust them. Insurgent towns were in the hands of the Revolution again; French troops had beaten the Austrians, hurrying them across the Rhine; the Piedmontese had been driven from the valley of the Arve, Spaniards from the Basque country; the Vendéans were suffering defeats, Toulon had been evacuated by English and Spanish, and French armies imagined they could fight the entire world. New

tactics suitable to the quality and daring of the men had been adopted; Carnot's policy of massed attacks, when all available forces were centred on this or that point, and charged with bayonets. To attack, he had written, that was the natural character of the French; battle on a large scale, and pursuit till the enemy was utterly destroyed. Generals were informed that a dreadful responsibility lay on them, and errors though involuntary would not be excused; and generals were guillotined. Meanwhile, Carnot was not satisfied to direct armies from Paris and to edit the Committee's army journal. He left his table and maps, posting to the front; tenacious in his designs, unshakable in purpose, allowing no interference, harsh with Danton, contemptuous with his political fellows, vexing them; and though he told generals to obtain supplies, goods of every kind from the enemy's territory, he was strict against unofficial pillage, drunkenness, venality, disorder, replacing commanders, salutary and wise in his estimate of men; and his courage under fire endeared him to the soldiers.

In October, when affairs were deplorable in Alsace, off he went, Coburg having surrounded Maubeuge with siege troops and entrenched a large covering force; and Maubeuge, lost to the French, would open the road to Paris. Carnot joined Jourdan, took charge, arranged a brilliant and hazardous concentration of troops in four days. They attacked the Austrians, and failed; changed their centre, attacking again; and there was great slaughter. Carnot led the men; and, having succeeded, he doffed his uniform and, in his civilian grey coat, went home to give the news, announcing victory and the relief of Maubeuge, making no tale of his own desperate leadership. He imprisoned himself in the *salle verte* anew, living sparsely, taking his rest on a mattress; returned to his schemes, planning the 1794 campaign, organising further victories, and a disposition of troops that led, after indecisive

actions and irregular fighting, to the battles of Tourcoing, an actual defeat, a moral gain, Tournai, Charleroi, and Fleurus. Jourdan's army was posted in a semi-circle round Charleroi, captured the previous day; Coburg's army covered a wider front, and he attacked in five columns. Firing began soon after dawn, went on for ten hours: blasts and strokes and counter-strokes, all bloody in the rage to kill. The French centre and left were almost annihilated. Jourdan saved the day with his reserves, making the final attack, adding to the toll of death, mutilation, torture; and Coburg ordered a general retreat. Fleurus, named the greatest battle won by Frenchmen since the reign of Louis XIV, left the country free from invasion for the next twenty years. The French overran Belgium; conquest-war followed, Holland being invested, Spain, Italy, the Danube menaced, the Alps crossed by Bonaparte.

While the troops won battles, the Convention extended the foundations of modern France; Napoleon could only supplement and reinforce its administrative work; and armies and Convention alike owed their being to the incredible activities and resource of the Committee. Carnot, after the early days of panic and defeat, had not failed to remember his creed as a Republican, his hope as a democrat earnest to make social equality and freedom realities in a world at last plucked from the control of despots; but like Condorcet and all intelligent rationalists, liberal economists and the humanist thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he knew the evils of democracy and saw that they would be averted finally and solely by education, general, civic and moral; that self-interest had formerly governed men. The noble republic, liberty in fact, not in phrase alone, could exist only when self-interest gave way to public-spirit and selfishness and egoism receded; when men thought in terms of their fellows. Such was his vision, with education as

a means of giving tangible shape to that vision; and he was partly accountable for *l'Institut National*; *l'École centrale des travaux publics*, forerunner of *l'École Polytechnique*; *Conservatoire des arts et métiers*, *l'École normale supérieure*, *l'École de Mars*, *Le Bureau des Longitudes*.

He took his turn as President of the Convention, made at least one memorable speech; by which time the Committee had become yet more dualistic, the workers and the politicians now regarding each other with a patent hostility as the Terror grew and the alleged need for terror diminished. The so-called *triumvirate*, Robespierre, Saint-Just and Couthon, were artful, cautious to avoid damaging themselves in Carnot's affairs; and he detested the stigma of Terrorist. He was familiar with men and the concealed and often unconscious motives actuating men, a keen observer, able to value the stoical nerve and determination of Saint-Just, also the excessive cold pride and arrogance of the pale young man; who could make no lasting, favourable impression on his elder, and watched for opportunity to harm him. Couthon could be as ruthless and foolhardy as Saint-Just, though more suave, propounding his gospel and excommunicating those who failed in a due reverence. Sentimentality, with its sequent cruelty, was as repugnant to Carnot as dogmatic ignorance and a political terror carried to inhuman extremes, and the perpetuation of such things on behalf of republican virtue revolted him, even as Saint-Just and Couthon irritated him.

Robespierre may have stirred less vexation and more contempt in Carnot than the others of the *triumvirate*; for Robespierre in Carnot's opinion was a man of reiterated phrases, paltry and sterile, ready with threats, tolerating Carnot because the country could not be saved by phrases, nor could anyone match or replace the army-chief. Let Carnot falter and he should lose his head, Robespierre said, nursing

his fear of militarists, jealous of any triumph not conspicuously his own, developing the sour animus of an ideologue confronted by a man of action; yet he, like Saint-Just, envied Carnot's genius at such a time, aware in these matters of his own limitations. Again and again he stared at Carnot's maps, taking instruction in a proposed movement of troops, not able to comprehend, irked, admitting his regret. What would he not give to have military acumen, he said. He began to chide Carnot for shielding aristocrats and men who might be useful in army affairs but lacked republican grace and virtue. Carnot had his task, needed suitable leaders, chose them for their administrative skill, heedless to their private notions at the moment, if they could serve him faithfully and well. Often he had to manœuvre, and sometimes without profit, to save a useful man from the mortal rancour of his fastidious colleagues. Kellermann and Hoche were imprisoned, and might have been executed had not Thermidor and the fall of the reputed dictators helped them. Saint-Just was no doubt responsible for Hoche's arrest. Hoche wrote to Robespierre, seeking protection. The order against the general had Carnot's signature. Yet Carnot, a man of his word, wrote that he had taken all the pains in the world to save Hoche from Robespierre. Consequently the truth of the incident remained dark, like the truth of so many incidents at that hour.

Shortly before Thermidor, and in preparation for tragedy, the quarrels intensified between committee men, between the *Comité de Salut public* and the *Comité de Sûreté générale*. These men believed in the indivisibility of the Republic, and could unite and harmonise only for a while, during national crisis. Altercations and scenes were frequent in the *salle verte*. Carnot in his anger called Saint-Just and Robespierre farcical dictators; Saint-Just accused Carnot of bungling military operations; Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois conspired with their acquaintance outside the



## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Committee against the *triumvirate*. The Committee, after drilling the whole of France and frightening Europe, could not quiet itself, and took to sitting in an upper room, brawls in the *salle verte* being audible to passers-by, and brawlers not without shame, apparently. Robespierre's insurmountable prejudice against Carnot waxed lyrical though not less vicious at the Jacobins; and had there been no Thermidor, Carnot also might have gone the way of the tumbrils, now that victory had been assured and France was free from invasion. He had no spectacular part in the downfall of Robespierre and his group, engaged with his army plans and maps, too busy to leap into the thick of political discord, though he gave his name to several of the orders issued by the lopped Committee when Robespierre and the rest lay under decree and the Commune and the Convention were at deadly grip on the night of the Ninth; and he breathed with profound relief at the result of that struggle, having yet much work to do, long arduous years to endure, before he went into exile and reached his quiet end as a grey old man.

### V

After Thermidor, Carnot defended his conduct during the recent terror, and was saved from proscription by his military renown; and he had part in the Thermidorian Committee, policy now being relatively moderate, yet despotic with the continuation of war and revolutionary government. He left the Committee finally, despondent though not abject when reaction throve and the youthful high spirit of the Revolution was decrepit. At the inauguration of a bicameral legislature, *Anciens* and the *Cinq Cents*, he had prevision of new internal troubles for France: two-chamber government appeared to him only proper to nations socially divided, improper when a nation

had allied itself to the Rights of Man, after routing privilege and founding a liberal republic. He opposed the centring of executive power in a Directory, though he held to his theory of public duty and citizenship and sat among the *Cinq Cents*; and he became a Director, accepting new duties, never solicitous. He had influence in the appointment of Bonaparte to the command of the Italian army; fell under suspicion, loyal to his republicanism, enmeshed in Directory cabals, afraid of military dictators and others, meanwhile at the head of the Constitutionals, refusing to associate himself with illegal designs. He stood for liberty at home, moderation abroad, and was proscribed, fled to Switzerland.

He came back after Brumaire, when Bonaparte started his dizzy climb; took office as war-minister, for a few months, shaken in hope for France, yet following that notion of duty and citizenship, uneasy with Bonaparte, valuing his military greatness, divining the regal ambition of the man; nor did Bonaparte trust Carnot, aware of his political faith and rectitude, his probity. Probity might have its beauty, Bonaparte said, but was no sure foundation on which to build in politics. Bonaparte, Carnot wrote, was not straightforward, needed ministers as a matter of form and who would be subservient to him, not to France: he, Carnot, could not remain much longer in such ministries. He offered to resign; and yet again, pleading for dismissal; and he broke with Bonaparte, though soon after he warned him of plots against his life and Consulship. Bonaparte, as Napoleon, could discover no administrative use for such a man, finding him unmalleable, not slavish enough for Emperors; but he respected Carnot's virtue, gave a pension to him when Carnot retired and soothed himself with mathematics; and Napoleon commissioned and Carnot wrote the famous work on fortification: *De la défense des places fortes*.

When Napoleon drew near to his fall, Carnot wrote saying that for long he had abstained from office; now, however, ill-fortune dogged the Emperor, and Carnot must offer to serve, able to do little in his age, though his example as an old soldier whose patriotic sentiments were known might help to rally France. He was sent to Antwerp as governor, charged to defend the town, did his duty heroically and unforgettably. Napoleon, in distress, wanted troops from all quarters and could leave only a few marines at Antwerp. Carnot said he must obey, though the result would be fatal: nothing remained but dishonour or death for him, and he and his shrunk garrison knew how to die. Bernadotte, Carnot's old fellow-soldier, now King of Sweden and a foe to France, announced the collapse of Napoleon to Carnot, and wrote that Louis XVIII would have the crown. Carnot must surrender his fortress. Carnot said he had accepted command from the government of France. When a new government was established incontestably, then he would be prompt to take orders; as in fact he did. Napoleon left Elba, and saved Carnot from arrest; made him Minister of the Interior, a count, a peer of the realm, to Carnot's grim amusement; and as minister he created the *Société pour l'instruction élémentaire*; and he urged his master to construct a sound democracy. "*Toujours vos idées républicaines, Carnot!*" always republican ideas! Yes, Carnot answered; recent monarchies were not the sort of thing to alter his opinion.

He tried to dissuade the Emperor from war-plans ending at Waterloo; and when Napoleon reached Paris after defeat, Carnot besought him to leave at once and put himself again at the head of his army. "*Je n'ai plus d'armée,*" Napoleon said; no army left! Then let him declare the country in danger, take extraordinary powers!—as if they were living in 1793. "*Carnot,*" Napoleon said, "*je vous ai connu trop tard;*" he had learned to understand the man only when it

was too late. He refused Carnot's last advice to escape to America; went to St Helena, Carnot, proscribed again, to exile, much wandering, poverty, death in 1823 at Magdeburg. He had vegetated tranquilly, he wrote, like an old oak nearing its end, having lived in an age of enlightenment and splendour, having seen the dawn of human reason with its promise that eternal truth would prevail over antiquated prejudice; and he prayed that those who succeeded him might be able to end their days with as much calm and as few regrets as he. He was buried in the civil cemetery of Magdeburg. His tomb had one word for inscription and epitaph: CARNOT.

The contradiction and iniquity in Carnot's life arose from the fact that he was a soldier, trained to kill: high virtue in his day, and since his day; and he was responsible, with others, for Danton's death, many deaths, under the rule of martial law. The French of his time had a heritage of war and the brutal methods and cruelties of war bequeathed to them by preceding ages: fire, slaughter, pillage, hangings, torture, atrocities. Death by the guillotine seemed merciful and painless in comparison with former methods of execution. Carnot took no pride or pleasure in the abasement of any creature, though his severity as a soldier and a patriot entangled and darkened his affections as a man; yet in his later circumspection he said there was no need to kill anyone to force them to believe this or that, no need to kill to prevent them from believing this or that; and great need to bear with infirmities common to all men, though prejudice must wear thin with time, if it could not be cured by reason. He escaped from theological tyrannies in his young manhood, developed his rationalism, maintaining it stoically in old age, unable to solve the problem of Free Will and Necessity, arguing to himself, like a Stuart Mill, that one must nevertheless hold to the hard responsibilities of a

doctrine of Free Will in one's own moral life, to the more tolerant idea of Necessity in respect of others. Even as a soldier he could be considerate, relying more on persuasion than on punishment, except at hours of peril. He could sacrifice himself, free from vanity, the angular, unlovely egoisms common to so many of his fellows, accepting the law of majorities, a good democrat, though he claimed the inalienable right of protest, a liberty of action, until such majority had been incontrovertibly proven; thenceforward doing all that was in him as a loyal citizen. If minorities were crassly stubborn in opposition, he said, they became factions, government by majority being the principle of eternal justice, the essence of all social polity, without which there could be only universal anarchy and intestine war.

That such a man could take a major share in a Committee as despotic as any limb of government in history, seemed paradoxical; but Carnot had been elected to that body, and had his duty as a citizen and a soldier. And he fulfilled that duty, sure that the spirit of France actuated and supported him. As a rule he left jarring harsh faction to the men of faction, absorbed in his work, organising the work of a nation, directing men in what to him must be the paths to freedom for Frenchmen and for humanity; to a new existence, when mankind should discover and appropriate wisdom, befriending one another; when enmity and revenge, wantonness and pride, would cease to canker them and to disfigure life.

He may have been romantic in his visions. He was superbly realistic as an administrator, and perhaps the most unequivocally honest man of his time.



ROBESPIERRE



## CHAPTER IX

### ROBESPIERRE ; AND NINTH THERMIDOR

#### I

CARNOT organised victory. Robespierre, at his death, was reviled as the organiser of the Terror. He had been named the Incorruptible in his day; and generation after generation used the phrase, ridiculing his life, belabouring the memory of a supposed political ruffian morally insane. A late writer defined him as the most hateful character in the forefront of history since Machiavelli reduced the wickedness of public men to a code. Other serious historians saw in him the prophet who might have founded a Social Republic on virtue and equality had he not been overcome by fraudulent low creatures at the hour when success appeared with a crown for him and his life-work; others a doctrinaire, cold, impassive, under the blight of a morbid self-esteem, spilling blood whilst professing to save humanity by a gospel of compassion. Napoleon, questioned at St Helena, shook his head and said Robespierre had been used as a scapegoat; and there was truth in that too; doubtless some truth in many contradictory statements made by responsible men; for Robespierre seemed to be the most puzzling, sombre figure of the Revolution, and his last tortured hours were piteous.

He was hypersensitive, nervously overwrought as a child destined for grief, much sore bewilderment; and in his seventh year, 1764, when his brother Auguste was an infant, the mother died, and the father, a brooding man of extreme sensibility, lawyer at Arras, could not fend against hardship and bereavement, lost his wits, all notion of responsibility, and deserted his



young family; came home, set off again, existing like a pariah abroad till death made end to his demented woe. Most children might have reacted in health and the promise of the morrow: Robespierre was humiliated and ashamed, feeling his isolation in a cruel world. As head of a family supported by unamiable relatives he was already tormented in his overmastering hauteur, that too, freakish, and he meant to keep his brother and two sisters, when he could, following the profession of his father, gaining renown where the other had so lamentably foundered. Misery and suspicion hardened and embittered him against the social laws accountable, he thought, for his own extravagant conviction of social degradation, and his raw mind fed on itself, creating dark fancies as he drew near to puberty, distempering his blood and nerve. Thus he launched himself on life with a burden of grievances, and a developed capacity further to becloud facts by corrosive fictions: no majestic sorrow in him at any time, but much rancour, and a lonely pride.

An ecclesiastic interested in the moody, silent boy, used his influence, and Robespierre went from school at Arras with a scholarship to the college of Louis-le-Grand, Paris. Here he came under the spell of humanists and philosophers among his preceptors, with Camille Desmoulins, his fellow-pupil, and grew familiar with revolutionary principles, head of his school in Latin and in composition when sixteen; chosen for a Latin speech to Louis XVI when the King paused at the University on return from coronation at Rheims: Robespierre's first speech, read from manuscript, as most of his speeches throughout life. He seldom did anything spontaneously, always meticulous, and pedantic. As a young man he went to see Rousseau, his idolised master, soon to become his Saint, so to remain until the disciple made a new trinity of himself and Rousseau and Deity, astonishing Paris with a civic Pentecost. Rousseau had taken refuge in his garrulous,

poisoned old age at Ermenonville; and thither the ardent, gloomy Robespierre made pilgrimage and, said report doubtless romantically, submitted to cross-examination, heard much of the People, above all of Virtue, and left the house, slavish in his admiration, thrilled to the hard core of his spirit, a visionary and a fanatic; certainly with *Du Contrat social* for Bible thenceforth, and the morality of the Savoyard Vicar for religion.

He qualified in law, left college with a money-prize given to the most distinguished student; a young man further saddened by the death of a sister he had loved, apprehensive, trained to prolonged, intense study, austere, frugal, coldly ambitious for legal success and social prestige; a monarchist and not a republican, anxious to spread the good tidings according to Rousseau; and bilious, myopic, a neuropath. He returned to Arras, expecting patronage, took possession of his family, loyal to them and expansive to no one, wishing to support them bravely; and at Arras he practised as a lawyer, always methodical, gravely laborious, encumbered with theory and principles. He used the bar as a pulpit, quoting philosophers, economists, and page after page from Rousseau, vexed when his dogmas did not inspire restive auditors, unaware that there could be anything tedious or arid in his rhetoric. The indifference of his fellow-townsmen augmented the heavy load of grievances; but he could not forbear moralising, and his clients wanted law, not sermons. In advice concerning a will he chose elaborately to declare that there could be no more formidable enemy to liberty than fanaticism. Untimely insistence on platitudes characterised him; and there could be no amendment in him. His verbosity strangled his thinking. Epigrams were too lean, simple phrases too bare for him; and he made conscience a touchstone and allowed it to hamper his career, renouncing an appointment because his duties included the passing

of death-sentences. He thought all human life sacred at this stage in his slow march to the *Comité de Salut public* and the murderous law of Prairial; and he could weep over the death of a pigeon.

He won respect, no affection in his town, though local fame when he argued for a client who had set a lightning-rod on his house, to the displeasure of the authorities. Robespierre thought he had saved that rod, and wrote to the inventor Franklin, in Paris, confessing delight at having done service to his country and honour to the most illustrious *savant* in the universe, he said, able to savour flattery, and to use it on the rare occasions when one of the very few living people he chose to admire were involved. Presently the lightning-rod was condemned again, this time on scientific grounds; and the town laughed at it and at Robespierre, adding to his rancour. Meanwhile he had literary promptings, wrote humanitarian essays, was elected to the local Academy; also he wrote vapid trifles in verse to obsequious young ladies, and so proved that now and again he was human enough to be silly.

The announcement of the States General opened new and entrancing prospects. He had failed in law and literature, ignominiously, now turned to politics and issued addresses and pamphlets on the necessity and means of reform. The enemies of the people had audacity enough to make sport of humanity, he said, and could he lack the courage to demand rights for humanity? Must he keep a mean silence when vice, armed with unrighteous power, trembled before justice and triumphant reason? The moment had come when sparks of sacred fire would enflame all life with courage and happiness. The Supreme Being understood the fervour and sincerity of his, Robespierre's prayers; and the mortal had reason to hope that the immortal would grant them. Robespierre had a new, eager audience to lecture and advise. He drew the portrait

of the ideal candidate, and had an alluring opportunity to preach the *Contrat social*. He stood for election, went to Versailles, fifth in a list of eight deputies, and with a note to his name that he undertook to speak for all.

Robespierre thought that at last he could air his disciplined and hitherto neglected genius, that Revolution would endow and enrich France, and especially Maximilien Robespierre, the disciple of Rousseau, the apostle of Virtue, the messenger of the Supreme Being; and he was in a deadly earnest, rigid, sometimes a little foolish, but not yet consciously flawed with the least touch of hypocrisy; maybe not so flawed at any time: an Alceste, not a Tartufe.

## II

Robespierre, away from Arras, thought no more of social prestige, having greatness in sight for himself, believing now that poverty and a Spartan simplicity were the inseparable attributes of greatness. He took a frugal lodging, shared his salary with his family after August, when deputies voted payment for themselves. He began to plod anew, and to suffer; for none of his fellows were inclined to give serious heed to this nonentity from Arras: a sinewy, small man carefully groomed, neat in deportment, like a solemn dancing-master, his hair powdered, the oval, sallow face pock-marked, the broad forehead sloping from thin eyebrows and jaundiced sharp little eyes partly concealed by tinted spectacles, by other rimmed glasses when he read his speeches. His expression was restless, his lips were long, bloodless, pinched at the corners, quivering in earnestness, nostrils dilated, his body rarely still, fingers contracting, his head jerking on narrow shoulders, as if he could not properly control it; and he spoke in a frail, high-pitched voice

in those days, and made himself heard only by effort. He paraded his moral generalisations, quite void of humour, convinced of his sacerdotal mission. When men smiled, laughed outright or jeered at this parsonical, tiresome fellow with the provincial accent, his unhealthy mania of suspicion had nourishment, and at times he lost his studied poise, resentment and aloofness in conflict with a passion to impress audiences and to give evidence of a worth he felt in all his pores.

He spoke professionally at every available hour and on most subjects, training himself in oratory, and out of his nervousness; and his first political act was an appeal to the clergy to join the Third Estate, a summons to the nobles, his parliamentary instinct having exposed the real situation to him. His amendment, attracting but scant notice, caught the ear of Mirabeau; indeed Mirabeau, though he had spoken sneeringly of Robespierre, was the first to glimpse his latent gifts, predicting that the lawyer from Arras would go far, since he believed in all he said. Robespierre had no wide range of mental vision, myopic here as elsewhere; yet sometimes he could see immediate facts, and at length force them on colleagues less alert; and success lay for him in that narrowness of vision, and in his heroic persistence. He repeated his formulas monotonously, declaiming his faith, anchored to Rousseau when others floundered in search of safe footing, grouped themselves, broke away. He stood before the Assembly like a rock in a turbulent sea; and after amusing or irritating men, he began to awaken interest by his resolute conviction and apparent stability.

When a bishop came to the Assembly and displayed a hunk of black bread, asking help for impoverished, hungry people, Robespierre, smelling hypocrisy, told the venerable gentleman that he and his rich brethren could go sell their coaches, get rid of their liveries, unfurnish their palaces of luxury, and so assist poor folk. He took place at the Left, joined the Breton

Club, affirming his ideal of universal brotherhood, deploring anarchy of any sort, at the moment; for things unseemly and bedraggled were abhorrent to his fastidious mind and senses. He had a gospel, a doctrine, already complete; a panacea for all the ills of life. The prosperity of Society, he said, rested on the happiness of each of its members, the power of Society on an attachment to law. Men were born to political equality, social rights, endowed with instincts of justice and reason; they were good and generous, only soiled by evil government and corrupt statesmen. The Rights of Man determined the entire social structure, and there could be neither peace nor hope for humanity until that fact inspired and controlled the world. Then, only then, virtue would speed. He wanted equal suffrage, execrating the division of active and passive citizens. The people must govern themselves through accredited representatives named by themselves, whether Kings, ministers or deputies.

There were two Robespierres. Before the autumn of 1792, the spring of 1793, and army defeats, Vendean rebellion, he was a lank, immature philosopher, held in a web of abstractions; a political idealist excusing the insolence and excess of the people, though firm against irregular and illegal efforts to frighten parliament; the insulated adviser of the people, of all men, and who had opposed death-penalties and the decrees against priests and *émigrés*, had resisted centralisation, defending all liberties. Then, as a patriot, friend of the Fourth Estate, the Sansculottes, he upheld death-sentences, war, despotism, most things he had regretted and often denounced formerly, now having an avenging policy, before, only a humane creed; now a demagogue, hitherto a formalist. He moved from pacificism by slow and insensible stages, assuming he was in full command of himself, enfolded in his seemingly impregnable and most virtuous armour; whereas in truth he was led, directed by the situation, unable to create,

spurred by his faith, and an intractable love of power; by his subtle ambitions and fratricidal hatreds. Always he stood for equality; he yet spoke frequently of liberty; but now there must be no gentleness with treacherous aristocrats, and Kings.

His insistence on a few cardinal ideas and his talk about the people had gradually excited men, and especially the Parisians; who began to have trust in him and his word, in the reality of that conscience he named so often and hoped to pursue unflinchingly; and when the Jacobins extended their Clubs over France and innumerable popular Societies were so many nurseries for a new citizenship, he became an oracle. Jacobins took dictation from him, the Cordeliers approved of him; and the Assembly was censorious, torn in itself, looking to the interests of its own predominant class. When he felt sure of popular support, he enforced the resolution that Constituent deputies should not be eligible for the Legislative Assembly, arguing that a democratic body must sacrifice personal interests to those of the community and make way for new men and new enthusiasms; and his intensity, his devotion to the revolutionary ideal, hypnotised many deputies. He carried his motion, and won the loud acclaim of Paris, the Clubs, the people. He was yet a constitutional monarchist after the flight to Varennes in June 1791, though tepid, feeling his way, uncertain, for republican demands were not general nor forceful; and he rose in public favour, calling again for the revocation of property qualifications that disfranchised many workers and all poor folk, continuing in his discreet progress from Third to Fourth Estate, knowing whence new authority would spring.

When the Cordeliers petitioned to depose Louis, and there was massacre at the Champ de Mars, he tried to persuade Jacobins to have no part in the unseasonable movement, took no directing part himself, invariably absent on occasion of street action. He

abominated riot, though watchful, ready to emerge, and to profit from change. He was in danger of imprisonment when La Fayette and Bailly had temporary sway and the Third Estate seemed about to swamp the Fourth. Probably Robespierre did not scent the danger; nor could he make prompt decisions at any hour of crisis. Duplay, a master-carpenter, a naïve Jacobin, admiring Robespierre, feared for him, led him from scuffle to his own home, near to the Club and the Assembly hall. Robespierre lodged with the Duplays from that day until his death, save for a short lapse; and he found the atmosphere congenial, the adoration and attention of his friends most pleasing. He may have considered marriage with one of Duplay's daughters, though in all likelihood he loved no woman and distrusted marriage, like a zealous, frigid priest. He had become a power, already a legend, as defender of the people; and his decision to house with the stalwart good carpenter did him as much popular service as his most democratic speech in the Assembly.

### III

Robespierre entrenched himself at the Jacobins during the Legislative Assembly year. He commented on all things, avuncular with the hotheads and madcaps of his own party; and he issued judgment against reactionaries, venal administrators, stockjobbers, peculators, gamblers, whoremongers, and others. He was elected as Public Prosecutor of the Criminal Tribunal, but had no zeal for such an uninspiring office as he peered ahead at plateaux and heights overshadowing the minor distinctions of local administration. He said he must plead the cause of humanity and liberty; a more sacred duty than that of Public Prosecutor. Feeling intensified round and about him. Brissot and the men who were to crash as Girondins had paid homage, and drifted away, tired of the wisdom that



came in spate from his oracular lips. These men were ambitious, and more eloquent than he, certainly not more sincere; and therefore, to him, fatuous and vain. The question of war bedimmed his halo at the Club, and there was schism. He found himself temporarily on the unpopular side, would not budge, suffered grievously, jealous of the Girondins, mistrustful, predicting disaster to their war policy.

He was ready enough for war on Kings when the Revolution had devoured the King of France; eager enough to call for natural frontiers and armed propaganda when such notions were advanced by his own coalition and not by the Girondins; and he would name Danton a traitor to the land when the first *Comité de Salut public* exercised itself in diplomacy and aimed for peace. In a moment of sagacity, however, he spoke of dictating peace, but a peace without victory. The real enemy, he said, was perhaps within French boundaries. A country in revolution must wage only a holy war; and Robespierre had not sanctified Girondin policy. Democracies needed peace in order to expand and to find stability: war fostered despotisms; and Robespierre could not brook Girondin despots, having other views in that matter.

Vergniaud had suggested that Robespierre should be made a minister. Other Girondins said No, adding to affront, stirring the bile in him. He began to wail autobiographically, fancying himself misunderstood, dispraised by the ignorant and the unvirtuous. Never had he taken sides with a party, always he stood alone, he declared, smarting under opposition from the Brissotins. He could be charged only with defending the cause of the people warmly. Tyranny and corruption, loathsome to him, were the monopoly of those who held the people in disdain. He was content to retire; he, Robespierre, the saviour of the country, the martyr of liberty! But where could he retire? what despot would offer asylum to him? No! One

might abandon one's country in the hour of triumph and joy; not when it was threatened. One must either save the country, or die for it. Heaven called on him to mark with his blood the road that led his countrymen to happiness and freedom. He accepted his destiny—and asked for the blood of enemies. The sword of the law, moving horizontally, must strike off the heads of the great conspirators; and conspirators, to him, were all men who did not make obeisance to theories enshrined in his soul.

He verily believed that Girondins were fraudulent democrats scheming for middle-class supremacy; enemies of the Rousseau gospel, consequently of himself. A disease of suspicion soon fouled his imagination and he thought Girondins were conspiring against the Revolution and intriguing with the Court, so many hypocrites, liars, scoundrels. There was malice and guile waiting to hatch in him, unbeknown to himself; and sudden hot angers. On occasion, as he strode to the pulpit at the Jacobins, about to make a speech, a red bonnet was set on his trimmed head by an enthusiastic bold fellow. Robespierre snatched it off as a thing pestiferous; because maybe it represented what seemed to him a mania for war and insurrection at a time when he opposed one and the other; or his personal vanities were touched, and he dreaded to feel and to look ridiculous. Red bonnets might be symbols of revolutionary virtue proper for ordinary men in need of leadership; but he embodied such virtue, and to perch grotesque symbols on the thing symbolised was blasphemous. Danton would have laughed cheerfully and fraternally, having such motley clapped to his great head; Louis could wear a red bonnet and smile in his good-humour; but there was neither laughter nor good-humour in Robespierre, virtue being saturnine and rigid, withal real to him.

The early war-disasters emphasised his opposition

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to the Girondins; and now he was apparently calm, dignified, a prophet and a seer. He did not share in the hurly-burly of June when the people raided the Tuileries, though he had much to say about La Fayette and the Feuillants. After Brunswick's manifesto he said that the French nation must support the weight of the world, must rank among peoples as Hercules among the heroes; yet he took no conspicuous part in the second revolution when Danton rose to pre-eminence. Robespierre sat at home with his faithful and obedient Duplays on that night as bells rang and drums rattled and the Sections were mustering to destroy old authority and to establish an imperious Commune. Never the man of action; though his envy quickened when Danton became Minister of Justice and there was no predominant office for Robespierre. He addressed the Jacobins and gave advice to the new Executive Council, yearning to head the movement when revolt called to him after victory. He had talked incessantly of the people, defending them, rarely associating with them familiarly, content to give instruction and blessings from the pulpit at the Jacobins. He had stood for the Assembly as the medium of representative government. Now he turned on the Assembly, in collusion with faction, since Paris wanted him, he Paris. He gave himself to Paris, ignoring the fact that his revered legality had been outraged, ready to scourge Departments who would not bow to Paris, the claws of political necessity having at last seized him by the throat; and he had phrases to aid him, legalising illegality. Two days after insurrection he told the Commune they had been named by the people; and the wisdom of the people, his wisdom, must be vigilant, protecting the country.

The Commune sent him as their spokesman to the Assembly, proud of his rectitude. He read a long speech, applauding the new power, addressing a legal body on behalf of an insurgent body justified by

success. A Republic was about to become popular. Robespierre ceased to be a monarchist. He swam with the roaring tide. His journal, *Le Défenseur de la Constitution*, marked the abrupt change. He wrote that Kings, or France, must yield: that was the result of a situation in which the people had fought gloriously against royalty. He had part in forming the original, short-lived Extraordinary Tribunal, and refused to be President; because he had already denounced men who would face the Tribunal, and he could not sit as a judge of his adversaries. During the early hours of the September Massacres he had his place with the bewildered Commune, useless; for action had broken loose again. He was sent with two others to the Temple to see that no harm befell the royal prisoners; merely a formal duty. He had nothing specific to say against those massacres after, unready to censure his flock, masters for a while; unready to impair his chance at the elections; and he was the first deputy returned to the National Convention by Paris. Danton followed the next day, with a larger majority; and the rest were Dantonists. Accordingly Robespierre had yet one more grievance. Danton outshone him. He heard that Madame Roland had called him, Robespierre! the *mannequin de Danton*. No doubt he was hurt by the truth of that phrase, brooded over it, staring thoughtfully and ominously into the future.

## IV

The brilliant young fighting men of the Gironde were not yet defeated, though wasting their power steadily, and had they leagued themselves with Danton, the Revolution must have taken other courses. They teased Robespierre, deriding him, and meant to delete him, if they could not convert him, but the first batteries were turned on Marat; and they skirmished

viciously against Danton. Robespierre did not cease to advance his axioms and postulates, voicing the opinion of Paris, adding to his fame as an incorruptible. A Girondin accused him of planning a dictatorship. Robespierre's answer seemed the righteous plaint of a true man assailed by a villain; nor did he answer at once, taking eight days to shape a defence. He a dictator! he, the most modest of revolution-soldiers! The Convention exonerated him. He had the offending Girondin, and Brissot and his friends, expelled from the Jacobin Club. He used Louis' trial skilfully, further damaging his opponents; for the Arras lawyer who shrank from death-sentences had become an avenger, soon to associate terror with virtue as a logical and natural attribute, pitiless now in his faith and fervour. And he had the young man Saint-Just at his elbow to fill the blanks in his rubric; to give spine of steel, if he could, to the flaccid muscle of the Rousseau disciple.

The Convention were not the judges of Louis, Robespierre said: they were politicians representing the nation. Thus he refused to play judicial hypocrite during the trial. The Convention must not pass sentence for or against a single man: they must resolve a question of public safety, and by an act that would impress all hearts with a disgust of royalty, and stupefy the friends of a perfidious King. He, Robespierre, would not outrage reason by considering the life of a despot as of greater worth than that of a common citizen. He would be inflexible against oppressors, because of his compassion for the oppressed; he would have nothing to do with a humanity that sacrificed whole peoples in the will to protect tyrants.

Thenceforth Robespierre attacked Danton's foreign policy, demanding that any coward who proposed to treat with the enemy should be liable to a death-penalty; and subsequently he upheld the diplomacy of the cannon and victory. In the Constitutional

debates he tried to outbid the Girondins and to discredit them. The new Girondin Declaration of Rights preceding Condorcet's draft Constitution, stated that citizens were masters of their own goods, capital, revenue, industry, and could dispose of them at will. Robespierre, absorbed in the social problem, as always, said that citizens had the right to enjoy only such command over property warranted by law; a right limited by the obligation to respect the rights of fellow-citizens, and without the power of doing harm to the security, liberty and property of others. Society must provide for the subsistence of all its members, either by finding work for them, or by keeping them if they were workless. Those who lacked the necessities of life must be provisioned by their more fortunate brethren. These magnanimous, just reforms were a little neglected when Robespierre and his associates had suppressed the Girondins and could announce their own Constitution, number Three, when the need to seem more democratic than the Girondins had passed; though they did in fact control food prices and tax the rich to subsidise others, paid the more humble members of Sections and revolutionary Committees, gave food to the hungry and punished bakers who made bread of white flour for the wealthy, bread of low quality for the rest, instead of *le pain de l'égalité*, equality-bread for all. Nevertheless they were firm against any coalition of workers and would hear nothing of trade-unions.

Robespierre watched the preparations when Marat roused the Sansculottes and Hanriot with his guns besieged the Convention; and he appeared at the Jacobins after, and spoke of most necessary insurrection. Danton troubled him meanwhile; but Danton grew weary of men and events and was soon to retire to the country ere the belated return to action, and defeat. The *Comité de Salut public*, recreated under Robespierre's influence, consolidated itself; and then

and only then he chose to sit in the *salle verte*, though he and his friends were the minority, and the others used him, as he sought to use them. They advanced slowly to government by martial law; the scourge of vice, in Robespierre's phrase, a system to be regulated not by a Hébert with his Cordeliers, or by proconsuls or unsubmissive tribunals, but by the Committee itself. He who hates vice, hates men, Danton had said of Robespierre; another prod for a man who could see no wisdom in marrowy paradox; and Robespierre prepared the way for a general crushing of vice. He, like Danton, might have tolerated the Girondins had they been content to remain quiet and still, avoiding rebellion; and he was not personally or wilfully responsible for a terror that synchronised with his development. The war situation, above all civil war, dictated to the executive. A raving group of Sans-culottes, with Hébert as their spokesman, called for heads as Marat had called for heads; and Robespierre at first identified them with his beloved people, allowing himself to be swayed; for the people had given power to him. He was not always in thrall to them, however, and saved the imprisoned seventy-five deputies from death.

Presently he wondered if he could now attack the Hébertists, the *exagérés*, ultra-terrorists offensive to all good patriots and who aimed to restore the Commune to its old predominance; if he could attack the Dantonists, the *indulgents*, who spoke and wrote of mercy, reacting against the severity of the Committee, France being now almost free from invasion; men who, in his opinion, encouraged aristocrats, monopolists, financial tricksters, and debased revolutionary government. Both groups were politically dangerous to him and, he thought, to France; for to abolish methods of a regulated terror, martial law, would be to take supremacy from the Committee; and to join with Danton would be fatal to his own hope of supremacy. He awaited a

favourable moment and spoke at the Convention about his programme, enlightening deputies on his views of political morality. They stood for liberty, equality, and the reign of eternal justice, he said, basing democracy on public virtue, trusting to the natural goodness of the people. Virtue in time of peace; virtue and terror in time of revolution. Virtue, without which terror was abominable; terror, without which virtue was helpless, terror being prompt and rigorous justice, emanating from virtue. And so a despotism of liberty, making war on the old despotisms of slavery: war against enemies abroad, and enemies at home divided in two factions, one urging indulgence, the other mad slaughter; one, the Dantonists, turning liberty into a prostitute, the other, the Hébertists, into a Bacchante. Such was the new gospel according to Robespierre.

Hébert, leader of the Cordeliers Club, Danton having ceased to attend, was substitute to Chaumette, Public Prosecutor to the Commune, a would-be philanthropist less vulgar than Hébert, and alternately dreamy and frenzied in search of his particular ideal; and together, with their Cordeliers intimates, and men of the Commune, and of the revolutionary-army, they had opposed Robespierre, seeing a foxy old sacerdotalist in him with his religion of virtue. They wished to steal power, to install a dictator, not satisfied with the *Comité de Salut public* and what to them seemed a timid policy; and Committee men Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois were in sympathy with them. Hébertist pressure, and starvation in Paris, had been partly responsible for the Law of Suspects, the use of the revolutionary-army, the economic terrorism of the autumn, 1793. About that time, the Hébertists had founded a cult of Reason. A minority were atheists, the majority deists, and all were antagonistic to Catholicism, detesting Catholics as anti-revolutionary; in fact the cult stood for national defence as well as for natural religion; and some of them were as dogmatic



as old religionists, though professing to allow freedom of conscience. They were attractive to Parisians, and had a large, deistic following in the country, wherefore the eventual cult of the Supreme Being might be said to have had origin in the movement it was supposed to counteract. There were Feasts of Reason, rationalistic demonstrations, irreverent masquerades, satirical charades of orthodoxy; and efforts were made to establish *décades*, tenth-day celebrations in place of Sundays; hence persecution, much good-tempered raillery, and some obscenity in this process of de-christianising.

Robespierre undoubtedly saw and felt in Hébertism a design to overthrow Committee government, and he was profoundly shocked by the worst features of the Reason-cult. He used cunning and branded the whole movement as atheistic, showed courage and, he thought, statesmanship, in his denunciations, anxious to placate those of the outraged Catholics who were also patriotic Frenchmen. Atheism, he said, was aristocratic: the ideas of a supernal being who watched over oppressed innocence and punished crime were essentially of the people. Danton helped him, and as a political realist, not as a doctrinaire. Matters hung in suspense. Robespierre, nervous and indecisive at an hour of crisis, wavered, not sure of the public pulse; and he went into retirement for a month, nominally ill, and reappeared when the Hébertists, attempting a Cordeliers insurrection, failed, only a minority of the Sansculottes having rallied to the *exagérés*. They were arraigned in March, 1794, accused among other items of collusion with the enemy, of seeking to make the Revolution nauseous to Frenchmen by revolutionary excesses. Thus a political trial, much subterfuge; and Hébert and his group went to the guillotine, and the centralised executive, omnipotent now, suppressed the Cordeliers Club.

Danton and Desmoulins, in the first numbers of

the *Vieux Cordelier*, had served Robespierre against the *exagérés*; and now Robespierre, the Committee, turned on them. He had been uncertain here too, for months, excusing Danton, censuring him, covertly denouncing him; and at last he may have been actuated by a fear of Danton, or a genuine aversion to the man's political theory, to his unsanctified, carefree usage of life and of money, to his disreputable associates; or he may have been propelled by Saint-Just, apparently a leader, actually led. Danton and his group went to the guillotine. Yet Robespierre was not free from vexation, recent events having provoked dissent in the Committees, the Convention, the Commune. Revolutionary Committees of the Paris Sections, of the Communes throughout France, so useful to Country-in-danger government, formed originally as vigilance committees, pursuing suspects, filling the prisons, and composed of middle-class democrats, workmen, and the paid Sans-culottes—they too, here and there, seemed unvirtuous, in need of purge. Meanwhile friends of Hébert, Danton, the Girondins, and others, were alert, awaiting opportunity, though discreetly quiet at the moment.

## V

Robespierre had now rid himself of timidities and sickness, fancying he could mould a new social order in harmony with his ideas of virtue, equality, and a Supreme Being; and he was attentive at the Committee, having interest in most things, industrious and verbose at the Convention, assuming that since deputies had delivered a Danton to him without troublesome protests he could manage them at will. Assuredly he frightened them. A member who chanced to put a hand to his brow and saw Robespierre's jaundiced glance on him, removed that hand brusquely, scared, as he said, that Robespierre might suppose he thought of something.

All men were apprehensive. The new Mayor of Paris, and the Commune, seemed obedient; the bulk of the Jacobins were faithful; the President of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and his successor, were respectful; Fouquier-Tinville, the Public Prosecutor, a man risen from an amiable obscurity, hoping to thrive, sinister now by the nature of his work, seemed reliable, though actually mistrustful; the salaried jurymen, with carpenter Duplay as chief, were subservient; the National Guard under Hanriot, *la bourrique de Robespierre*, his donkey, presumably could be counted on. Robespierre's danger, faintly understood, not immediately acknowledged, lay in the *salle verte*.

Several men on mission had been reproved by him; notably Tallien, a wily, shrewd fellow, unscrupulous, lewd, gay; and Fouché, a genius at intrigue, subtle and adroit beyond most men of his time, of any time, and destined to fame, and infamy, and at the moment accused of impiety and cruelty. There was peril in Robespierre's reproofs. Collot d'Herbois had said that the Supreme Being did well to remain invisible, for otherwise He too would be declared a suspect. Collot also had been reproved for impiety and cruelty and, with Billaud-Varenne, resented Robespierre's pontifical attitude at the Committee; and Carnot and the workers disdained him, and were therefore under suspicion; and suspicion and hatred were synonymous in the overdriven mind of Robespierre at this pass. There must be a new purge, deletion of anyone who stood in the way of his inaugurating the new social order, the social revolution following the political revolution, when by wholesale suppressions and confiscations, and much republican virtue and justice, there should be nor rich nor poor in France, all citizens now levelled, social equality having at last become a superb reality, transforming mankind.

The prisons were crowded, executions increased daily. In the smoking thick of these labours, Robe-

spierre held himself upright, the apostle of virtue and a regulated, a necessary, terror. He kept his retreat for rest and meditation at the Duplays; where, each night, after his regular discourse at the Jacobins, he sat in his room, surrounded by portraits, busts, prints of himself; and he trimmed and polished his speeches, obsessed with the illusion of greatness, allowing his adorers and colleagues to have occasional word with him, sometimes reading to them from Racine and Corneille, or hearing a little music, before the hour when they must retire and he could resume that endless trimming and polishing. No joy in him.

As an indispensable preliminary to his new social order, and the cleansing of the executive, he decided to promulgate a new faith, sure that the people could not dispense with some or other form of worship; the sponsor, not the creator, of a deistic religion.

He reported on the relation between moral and religious ideas and republican principles, and announced the Religion of the Supreme Being, Rousseau's Supreme Being; as if he were in truth the Messiah he had been named recently by a religious-maniac, Catherine Théot, and those who believed she had a real inspiration. He spoke at great length on the characteristics of the moral and physical world, and nature, arguing that if the existence of God and the immortality of the soul were but dreams, they would yet be the noblest conceptions of human intelligence. He summarised the Revolution, so far as he could summarise anything, and said that it had only fulfilled itself in part. Atheism yet raised a vicious little head, and should be destroyed. The people must be enrolled under a new banner, with device, God and the Immortality of the Soul! Nature was the priest of the Supreme Being, the universe His temple, virtue His worship. France must substitute morality for egoism, duties for convenience, honesty for ambition, principles for conventions; pride must replace insolence, great-heartedness vanity, love

of glory a love of gold; intrigue must give way to merit, wit to genius, cleverness to truth, dull pleasures to real happiness; and for the vices and follies of monarchy they would have the virtues and miracles of republican government, fulfilling the vows of nature, accomplishing the destinies of humanity. The new State religion was the outcome of these exalted views and of the cult of Reason, and he put his motion to the Convention finally: the French people recognised the existence of the Supreme Being and the Immortality of the Soul; a proper worship consisted in the duties of man; such duties involved the detesting of bad faith and tyranny, the punishment of traitors, the helping of the unfortunate, the defence of the oppressed; Festivals should be instituted to recall men to the thought of the Godhead and the dignity of existence. This was decreed; and the new religion survived Robespierre only by a few months.

He had himself named President of the Convention, so that he might preside over the Feast of the Supreme Being in June, 1794. The guillotine was hidden from sight that day. He dressed and powdered himself with his customary great care, and wore a sky-blue coat, white nankeen breeches, a tricolour sash, and a plumed hat. Drums and bells and guns had sounded the day at an early hour. Men and women marched in separate columns to the Tuileries, a third column of young patriots between them, all bedizened, and carrying flowers, oak-branches, muskets and pikes severally. At noon, Robespierre led the Convention to the scene, and deputies wore the regalia of representatives on mission, and carried bouquets; flowers and corn-sprigs. A wooden structure, an amphitheatre, had been arranged in front of the Palace, and here the Convention took position and bands played tunes to greet them. Then silence. Robespierre addressed the immense and attentive crowds, spoke of God, of Kings and priests; of love, happiness, virtue.

Opera singers, and the crowd, sang appropriate odes and hymns. At considerable risk to his dignity and deportment he walked gravely and alone from the amphitheatre to an allegorical structure built on a covered pond: Atheism with a group of Vices, Madness beside her. He seized a torch, set fire to Atheism; who ought to have flamed, expiring straightway, to reveal Wisdom triumphant. Something went wrong; perhaps workmen on a ladder gave help; and Wisdom appeared finally, rather scorched, besooted. Robespierre went back, gravely and alone, to the amphitheatre, made another speech, telling folk that the monster the genius of Kings had vomited on France had returned to nothingness; and might all the crimes and misfortunes of the world disappear with it! After another hymn, a procession formed, escorting a car drawn by eight cows with gilt horns, and piled high with a plough, wheat-sheaves, a printing-press, a tree of liberty, and a woman, Liberty, carrying a stout club; thus by circuitous long ways to the Champ de Mars, where a symbolic mountain stood on the site of the Fatherland Altar. Robespierre marched some yards in front of the Convention; isolated like a pontiff, with his bouquet, radiant in his blue coat and his apostolic glory; and deputies whispered and tittered and scowled behind him, menacing him and his mummery, tarnishing that glory, since he overheard them, or divined their mood. They ascended the mountain; there was a further singing of hymns, bray of trumpets, burning of incense, much fraternal embracing; and flowers were flung heavenward, sabres drawn, blessings given, guns fired anew: the tree of liberty, perched on the mock-mountain, swayed unsteadily. And there an end.

Among reasoning adults, the countrymen of Molière, Voltaire, Diderot, few demonstrations could have been more fatal to Robespierre, to his Supreme Being, his paraded sublimity, his most earnest, most genuine

and on that day most woefully comic morality. He may have realised his peril. Le Bas, Robespierre's loyal friend, told his wife at night, and in consternation, that the country was lost; and Robespierre himself predicted to the Duplays that soon he would be gone from them. Or he may have thought that with a Supreme Being established by law, and Robespierre as high priest, a few additional operations of surgery would clear disease from suffering France, after which all must be well, terror having been suppressed by him, and only by him, with the end of provocation.

He was feverous immediately after, embittered, aggressive; no serenity left to him; and within forty-eight hours of the Feast, Couthon proposed a measure drafted by Robespierre, the Law of Prairial. Anyone who would subordinate public safety to the inventions of jurisconsults and the formulas of a court of justice, Couthon said, must be foolish and wicked. Under this new law the Revolutionary Tribunal was re-constituted, the staff enlarged, and juries had full powers to convict: treason was made to consist of almost anything, and included the depraving of morals, the corrupting of the public conscience. The law was not concerned so much with punishment, but rather with annihilation of enemies, Couthon said. Proofs were only requisite in the minds of jurymen; there were to be no preliminary enquiries, no witnesses for the defence, no judicial equity of any sort. Robespierre was accused of having had his foes in view, resolved to outmatch them at the opportune hour, because, he thought, they were needlessly ferocious, disgracing the Revolution by their atrocities, or perversities; and the law apparently deprived the Convention of the old right to protect members; a clause resisted, passed at length, after assurances, and oblique threats, from him.

Robespierre, with Couthon and Saint-Just, devising the Law of Prairial, had ignored the *Comité de Sûreté*

*générale*, hitherto responsible for the supervision of the Revolutionary Tribunal; had seemingly ignored their colleagues on the parent Committee. This autocratic procedure angered committeemen who were opposed to Robespierre's social programme, his agrarian policy, if such in fact was his policy and not solely Saint-Just's; to a use of the Terror as a means of confiscating the property of suspects, now to be rounded-up perhaps by the hundred-thousand, the funds derived being spread among Sansculottes, so to form the basis of the new social republic, a levelling republic. Robespierre, probably, had no clear, firm policy at this exacerbated stage, entangled in his theory of virtue and terror, nervously overwrought, beating air, ravaged by suspicions and mistrust, half-mad in his distractions, at one moment imagining himself to be that flail of God, a righteous dictator, then bewildered, agonised in his doubts, afraid, expecting assassination; meanwhile longing that peace, comfort, happiness, should be the reward of all good men.

No deputies were immediately arrested, either because he hovered, unable to decide on a list, or because the Committees refused to submit to him and he could not, dare not act alone. Otherwise the effect of Prairial was instant, and horrible, the new measure being accountable for as many executions in six weeks as in the preceding five years, forty, fifty, then sixty heads falling each day, though all risk of invasion had passed; and by the eve of Thermidor the aggregate total of Tribunal death-sentences reached about two thousand five hundred. Helpless creatures were grouped in batches, spies at the densely-thronged prisons having made their lists at will and caprice, feeding the guillotine. A young sempstress, Cécile Renault, had been arrested as she wandered in the vicinity of Duplay's house, armed with toy-knives, a pen-knife, something of the sort, as if in a juvenile, half-crazy fashion she thought of imitating Charlotte Corday, and spied on Robespierre.



About the same time, a royalist fanatic, determined to shoot Robespierre, could not get to him, and so chose Collot d'Herbois; shot at him, missed him, and hit an unfortunate fellow near-by. The *Comité de Sûreté générale* dealt with the two incidents as one, sent the girl, her innocent relatives, and others, to the guillotine: fifty-four in all, condemned as parricides, loading six tumbrils and dressed in red shirts. Their slaughter was called the Red Mass, and did much to shock Parisians, as the Committee may have foreseen and intended, and to strengthen reaction against terror, and Robespierre; who had made no attempt to intervene. Crowds who had hailed the deaths of King and Queen, Girondins and so on, recoiled now, sickened, Paris being in covert revolt. Robespierre was endangered before his enemies advanced with their conspiracy.

The *Comité de Sûreté générale*, originally supposed to share authority with the *Comité de Salut public*, had formerly commanded the police of the Republic, in collusion with and under the direction of the main Committee; recently, however, Saint-Just had secured powers to create a new police bureau, to watch members of the executive among others; at first controlled by several committeemen, and then by Robespierre, who acted in secret. The *Comité de Sûreté générale* were indignant; and, led by their President, Vadier, a subtle, cool lawyer, a satirical old wag and an ardent de-christianiser hostile to Robespierre and Supreme Beings, they began the attack on him and his ascribed dictatorship, using the Catherine Théot affair to discredit him, ridiculing his fictitious Messiahship, undermining him artfully, without scruple or shame. They were encouraged by Carnot, Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, the nimble Barère; and Tallien, Fouché, by all men who had been censured of late for their excesses and felt cold steel unpleasantly near to their throats. Meanwhile Robespierre attended Committee meetings reluct-

antly, able to trust only Saint-Just and Couthon; and then he withdrew, sulking and brooding, and enclosed himself mostly at the Duplays or at the police office, blundering as fatally as a Danton in the disregard of forces, and malice, gathering against him.

Many of the Mountain now likewise suspected him of a design to play dictator and were approaching the mood when they might forsake him, swayed by his concealed opponents; and the Plain, after the law of Prairial, feared for their own safety, and were at last to be persuaded, though not with ease, to join the conspiracy, on promise that terror should cease at the deposition of the *triumvirate*. Robespierre may have sensed danger, and certainly he was in a rage, knowing that the Mountain had lost stability. Once more he misjudged the situation. He presumed that he could rely for help on the one-time docile, usually silent Plain, and therefore would be able to purify the Convention, the Committees, the Commune; and rid France of Godless factions, ending the Terror, founding the social republic, at his own time. Furthermore, he had used threats in the Convention, had harmed himself grievously, refusing to be specific, naming no deputy, discomforting all.

The two Committees joined in consultation, following custom, and may have sent for Robespierre and Saint-Just, as though they were outsiders who must answer charges. If Barère's account was reliable, the Committees demanded a revocation of the Prairial law, were violent in abuse. Robespierre and his friend left them, unrepentant and haughty, uttering further threats, reviling the attempt of the new *indulgents* to protect scoundrels from national justice. . . . The events of this restless dark time of preparation and intrigue were confused, records contradictory and vague, personalities having usurped principles; and, afterward, men no doubt lied to shield themselves. Barère sought to reconcile the *triumvirate* and the Committees. Four

days before Robespierre's fall, he came from his reclusion to attend a plenary joint session of the Committees, and there was agreement to prolong the Terror so that it might advance the new distribution of wealth and the social republic. Saint-Just promised to report to the Convention on the political situation and to defend revolutionary government; and, soon after, the Convention demanded a report from the Committees on the trouble of faction. Thus Robespierre had opportunity for his speech on Thermidor 8; and he worked laboriously and incessantly, fashioning his defence; a plea for a vote of confidence in himself; for authority against the enemies of France and all corruption. He would bring matters to issue, feeling thwarted at the moment, dissatisfied with the recent effort to soothe tempers, unable to compromise, unconsolable. He was ready for action, that is, for speech, his method of action, on the evening of the 7th Thermidor, July 25; in the meantime ignorant of clandestine work advanced by Fouché and his group, nearing completion, unifying opponents, Hébertists, Dantonists, Girondins, in the imperative need to oust a common enemy.

## VI

There was a legend that Robespierre had taken to riding and pistol-practice, training himself against the physical nervousness, the palpitations, quiverings, in-born fears natural to his frail body and bleak spirit, irksome to his mind and high moral courage; that on occasion he had been helped from his horse, fainting, his nerves pitifully unstrung by tormenting and unsubduable fancies. He was apparently tranquil on the morning of Thermidor 8 when he rose to address the Convention. He did not yet realise that his absence had shaken his position and had given chance to adversaries; and he trusted to his unquestionable skill

as a debater, expecting to rout opposition, silence the Mountain and mould the Plain to his wishes, crushing the *exagérés*, removing all hindrance before he would establish the new and benevolent social order.

At once he spoke like a dictator, unable to be conciliatory at any time, though he repudiated autocratic designs. Always he had championed a republic of virtue and religion, he said, and would continue to resist anyone who opposed or sullied the national ideal. He blamed his personal enemies for the horrors and executions, repeating that they had flung patriots into gaol, spreading terror. Whether he referred to blackguardly proconsuls, or committeemen, was doubtful, also whether he did or did not feel responsible for the Prairial law; in truth, the speech, as his doings at this stage, appeared contradictory, weakness and strength, virtue and terror, alternating with passages of a genuine, heartfelt nobility; nor could he avoid autobiography. He spoke of sensitive pure souls, of passions tender yet severe at once a grief and a delight to magnanimous thinkers. He had a profound hatred of tyranny, an affectionate zeal for the oppressed, a sacred love of country, humanity, public happiness. But Atheism and Indulgence, excess and feebleness, had reappeared. There were traitors, conspirators, plots against the national liberty. The wickedness had its root in the Convention. Revolutionary government must continue, pitiless against conspirators, though they masked their villainies and rapacity under a guise of compassion. The Revolutionary Tribunal, rendered odious in order to bring destruction on it, the *Comité de Sûreté générale*, and even the *Comité de Salut public*, must be purged. He had a fling at Carnot, who had refused to execute a recent decree that forbade the taking of prisoners among English and Hanoverians; who had protected the military aristocracy. Robespierre wanted enemy corpses, not prisoners, bloodthirsty in this matter. He censured Barère indirectly, and his diplomacy;

swinged Cambon, the obdurate, bold economist and his financial systems; and he ended by challenging all greedy stock-jobbers, swindlers, corrupt administrators, unbridled terrorists, all factions and anyone who disagreed with him, demanding a powerful and reorganised Committee under the supreme authority of the Convention.

He had named only Cambon and Fouché, not specifying others who must go in the process of weeding. Probably he reserved a full list for the morrow, anticipating help from the Plain before he sped to extremes. The Convention, momentarily awed, moved that copies of the speech should be distributed throughout France. Robespierre believed he had won. Vadier had a sly tilt at him, and raised a laugh over Catherine Théot. Cambon, always shrewd, intrepid now, said that before he was dishonoured he would speak to France of this insupportable fellow who strangled the republic. Billaud-Varenne said the speech ought to be closely examined by the Committees ere distribution; that he would die rather than play accomplice to ambitious evil by silence. Robespierre was told to name culpable deputies. He refused, fatally. The decree to print and distribute the speech was annulled. He had lost his majority. He sat down, pale, distraught for a while.

That night he recovered at the Jacobins, gave his speech again, his testament of death, he said. They drove Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois from the Club, mauled them, crying death to them. Had Robespierre used the hot enthusiasm, and men of the Commune under soldier Hanriot friendly to him, he might have felled his enemies. He was bondsman to theory, a parliamentarian, relying on his now illusory gifts to persuade deputies. He would not give himself to armed action. He went home, and to bed, and left conspiracy to advance as he slept. Fouché, Tallien and others, very much awake, dressed their programme,

arranging with the aid of Collot d'Herbois, President of the Convention, and men of the Mountain and the Plain, to prevent Robespierre from speech; tribute to his oracular skill. Late at night, Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois, driven from the Club, burst into the *salle verte*. Until daylight they raged at Saint-Just, who sat writing a speech; his indictment, as he told them calmly. He promised to let them see the manuscript before he spoke at the Convention; and he broke pledge, he at least unashamed of trickery; direct, forceful, when Robespierre hesitated and floundered.

The public galleries at the Convention were crowded at an early hour the next morning. Robespierre came about ten o'clock, with his usual guard of votaries; for he was in perpetual fear of assassination. He wore the sky-blue coat and nankeen breeches of the Supreme Being Feast, so encouraging himself maybe for the imminent death-duel. He stood near to the tribune, having to get new majorities that day. He isolated himself, as at the Feast, before leading the virtuous new band. Tallien and Fouché and their men were busy in the corridors, strengthening alliances. When Saint-Just began to read his indictment, they hurried into the chamber. The moment had come, Tallien said to a neighbour: Robespierre's last day. He interrupted Saint-Just. Now, he said, the veil must be torn away completely. Saint-Just had no further opportunity for speech. Billaud-Varenne followed Tallien, Vadier took up the tale of woe, recrimination and derision. There was uproar. Collot d'Herbois hammered on his presidential bell, his appointed share in the scrimmage to prevent Robespierre, Saint-Just and Couthon from being heard. Presently he descended from the chair, and was vociferous below. Thuriot, a Dantonist, a Bastille hero and splenetic democrat, took his place, he too hammering on the bell. There were sustained loud cries: "*A bas le tyran!*" Robespierre, gesticulating, tried to make himself heard. He could

not roar like a Danton, could not make way by sheer force. He thought he might win if only he could shout. After ineffectual struggle he chose to wait till his assailants were hoarse and limp. Barère spoke adroitly, harmful to Robespierre, not mentioning him. The Convention began the decrees of arrest with Hanriot, and others. This news soon reached the Commune. Men started to arm.

Robespierre, prevented again from speech, lost self-control. His voice nearly suffocated him as he made his appeal to the Plain, and found them deaf, like the Mountain. He called Thuriot a President of assassins! Would they let him speak! He asked for the last time! He may have been told that the blood of Danton choked him. He took a step toward the Plain, yet appealing. They were pure and virtuous! They thrust him back, perhaps reminded him that Vergniaud and Condorcet had sat here. He was voiceless now, sweating, impotent. The Plain added to the cry: "*A bas le tyran!*" Two obscure deputies proposed the arrest of the man who wished to dominate the Convention. No one dissented. The arrest of Saint-Just and of Couthon was decreed. Robespierre's brother, the affectionate Auguste, and Le Bas, Saint-Just's old colleague on mission, begged the honour of sharing with the *triumvirate*. They were duly honoured. The five were at length sent to their several prisons, in the evening, Hanriot, after violence, being also under arrest.

The Commune had in part risen, closing the city-gates, sounding the tocsin. There were divisions among the people. Sections who had favoured Hébert were hostile to Robespierre. Patriots weary of the Terror imagined a symbol of terror in Robespierre. Many Jacobins had lost their obsequious regard for him. But the movement gained strength. Men and guns were clattering through the streets, armed groups forming into battalions. Hanriot was rescued, about

nine o'clock. He marched with rebels to the Hôtel de Ville, like a fool, instead of to the Convention, like a soldier. The Convention, accordingly safe for a while, began to act. They entrusted whatsoever armed forces they could raise to Barras, the sly old aristocrat, now a vigorous progressive, skilled in affairs, quite flexible morally, and something of a soldier. They appointed deputies to help in the rallying of Convention troops. The men of the Commune had wasted invaluable time, releasing impeached deputies, insisting that they should go to the Hôtel de Ville. Robespierre deplored such temporary freedom. Marat had gone before the Revolutionary Tribunal, had been acquitted; the Girondins had fallen directly after. Robespierre thought he too must be acquitted, and fêted. He had not foreseen the rising of the Commune, and probably did not trust the Sections, having done much in effort to tame them lately. He was taken from the Luxembourg prison to the department of police, hesitating yet, sorely perplexed. His acquaintance prevailed on him to go to the Hôtel de Ville, to consult with the emergency executive, hours having passed. Consequently his final chance of possible victory was stolen from him. He joined his friends at about eleven o'clock. Couthon, the last to be set free, arrived an hour or two later.

Now the Convention could outlaw prisoners who had defied authority by allowing themselves to be liberated. Deputies were sent to announce the outlawry to all the Sections. They rode on horseback to and fro, escorted by guards with torches, and called on all honest men to come to the aid of outraged law. The dread announcement frightened those who had not courage at once to give support to the Commune, and emboldened others to resist the Commune. At two o'clock of the morning, Barras could not tell whether fortune would or would not befriend him. He divided his forces, and went to the Hôtel de Ville. His subordinate Bourdon had learned Hanriot's pass-



word, and so gained approach to Commune headquarters. And here there was disastrous uncertainty, no unity of design, endless and futile argument. A notification sent to the Section of the Pikes, Robespierre's residential quarter, had four proper signatures, and the two first letters of Robespierre's name; as if, in his bewilderment and doubt, he could not sign, could not refrain, and did neither firmly. Perhaps that fragment of a signature typified the man at the moment. Orders of arrest were drafted, and remained only drafts; vigorous resolutions were discussed, and could not be executed. Doubtless Robespierre wanted to behave like a leader, could not, insurrection being repugnant to him, yet essential; nor could he allow others to lead. He swung between anxiety to act as if he were constitutional, and eagerness to profit by rebellion. He could find no pleasure in heading a rout of Sansculottes after having been the supposed master of France. He was an outlaw, yearning at his bowels to be within law, crippled by the folly and zeal of men who had enticed him from prison, so ruining his credit as a parliamentarian. Now reality had him by the throat. This time he could not withdraw discreetly until issues were settled. Saint-Just and Couthon wanted to act like warriors; as others who remained after the ominous outlaw-decree had filtered from the streets to the Hôtel de Ville, sending the faint of heart to their homes and safety.

The men of the few revolting Sections had been grouped in the Square outside, having awaited orders with their cannon since six o'clock. They were uneasy, wavering. Many had gone to the wine-shops for food, many to their beds. Their numbers dwindled steadily. Bourdon had taken possession of the cannon. He broke into the small room, adjoining the Council Chamber, where the outlaws were deliberating, and no doubt expecting that rebellion would thrive on the morrow. Auguste climbed from a window to a cornice,

fell, lay below with a shattered thigh. Hanriot climbed through a closet window, fell into a court and on to filth. He was haled out later, befouled, raging; one of his eyes, torn from the socket, hung on his cheek. Couthon, dragged from his chair, fell or was flung downstairs, and cracked his head. He too lay helpless. Saint-Just was impassive. Le Bas shot himself dead. Robespierre failed to kill himself; shot himself in the mouth, smashed his jaw. He was carried to the ante-chamber of the *salle verte*, lay hour after hour in his agony, stanching his blood with paper, his head supported by a box. Folk came to spy and to jeer at him; and he was insulted as they took him on a chair to the Conciergerie. The Revolutionary Tribunal had only to identify the outlaws; and they were doomed.

They went to the guillotine on the evening of Thermidor 10. The executioner twitched Hanriot's dangling eye from the cheek; tried to wrench paralysed Couthon into a position suitable for the knife. Robespierre screamed in torment when the bandage was torn from his broken jaw as he lay strapped to the plank, and his bloody mouth gaped. Crowds rejoiced at sight of his dripping head.

Others of the Commune died that evening, over a score in all; and yet others the next day, known familiarly as Robespierre's Tail; seventy of them.

## VII

Robespierre thought there were no earthly laws superior to laws of State and that lawgivers rose above the law at times of peril; but his procedure in Thermidor, when this so-called dictator was reduced by a blast of hate and fear to a maimed poor creature awaiting merciful death, revealed the flaws in him and did much to expose his mystery. Then and only then he had to face a situation calling for instant decision, firmness, physical as well as moral courage, and a

mind working at high velocity and free from abstractions; in short, all the attributes of leadership, when postponements and compromise were baneful. And he could not even shoot himself decisively. Often he had been able to retire into protective shades during crisis, emerging again to resume his stately way when a new stage lay open to him, cleared by the realists, problems insoluble to him having been solved by others. Men hypnotised by his assumptions and prestige, his unflinching skill in the manufacture of formulas summarising the dim thoughts and roseate hopes and aims of a people, had been ready to worship him; and they learned to fear his political designs. There was no greatness in him, no creative idea of positive value truly his own, no political stability natural to him as a thinker, a ruler, a commander. He stood as a lay figure, tricked out, heavily robed in the old clothes of Rousseau; and therefore, stripped bare, he seemed helpless, futile, pathetic as a dummy-statesman galvanised into a semblance of life and movement by an immeasurable vanity, a pride that befogged him; hence no reliable vision of the outer world, no true, clear sight of himself, no chance of permanent escape from the falsities that lured him into a jungle, to throttle him. Nevertheless, his fall gave predominance to middle-class industrialists, made end to social and economic equality and to his expressed hope for a state of affairs in which the country would guarantee the prosperity of every man, in which every man could rejoice proudly in the glory and prosperity of the country. The people must be rallied to conquer the bourgeoisie, he had repeated, since internal dangers came from them; and the social revolution virtually ended with him.

His integrity was real, his aspirations were noble; and they outdistanced his talent and became barren, save to cram and bloat his rhetoric and to convince him that he rose above men, alone in his righteousness. Citizens did not look to lay-figures for redemption;

flung them aside, trampled on them in the hurry and need to search for vital men with aspiration and faculty at one, and in whom genius hived, also the readiness to do and dare in leadership. Perhaps Robespierre puzzled early critics because they assumed unusual store of good, or of evil, in him as one of the most prominent Revolution figures; whereas the truth may have been that he was related falsely to the movements associated with him; masquerading as a creator, though only a poor sad fellow disabled in spirit, plaything for a ruthless and ironical destiny. A faint and sub-conscious suspicion of the inherent unreality at the core of his being may have troubled him now and again; for he would or could not allow self-reproach to mar his ponderous self-esteem; consequently an inability ever to be spontaneous, to overflow in generosity, to be prodigal of affection; likewise an intolerance, a rancour, self-pity, and irremediable mistrust of his contemporaries.

He had steeped himself in a love of abstract virtue, devoid of straightforward benevolence; nor could he ever be softened into gaiety. There were no records of his having laughed heartily at any time. One faith, one doctrine, infallible, exclusive and despotic, according to Robespierre, or rather, to Rousseau; and he the prophet, with a duty to regenerate his corrupt, most obstinate fellows; by the guillotine, when persuasion failed. Politics, he thought, must be morality in action, and that stood to his credit; but men must be saved by act of parliament, Catholicism transformed by decree into a rational and a legal deism. He was amazed, profoundly grieved at opposition, having no more sound understanding of men and of their age-long romantic and religious foibles than of himself; a new grand Inquisitor, destroying on behalf of souls and for the betterment of men, no humour in him, and so, no humility; an avenging high priest strayed from the middle-ages, stalking on as the fancied pre-

cursor of modernism, always dualistic, contradictory and, with his wiry thin logic, making formulas of his own antinomies: terror and virtue, virtue and terror. The sharp-salt lust for power caught him midway in his career, fed his vanity, swung him round on his own creaking axis, unbeknown to himself, and perplexed him in the extreme, deepening his unhappiness even while it allured him with a promise of greatness; and the man of abstraction had to battle with the realities of the Revolution, forced to action, unable to act, having to consort with the numerous and conflicting personalities of crowds. Meanwhile and always, a preciseness in trifles and a passion for order and neatness were virtues to him; and with his Rousseau-maxims he continued to treat mankind like a proposition in Euclid: a geometrical mystic, bloodless and joyless.

His admirers tried to prove in their loyalty that he was appalled by the Terror, not responsible for it, longed to end it; but assuredly he could be merciless and cruel, as the majority of proselytising religionists and dogmatists, forced by a situation. A Carnot used the Terror as a militarist; Robespierre as a theorist. Undoubtedly he was shocked by the atrocities of his subordinates, of his enemies. He had saved the crazy prophetess, Catherine Théot, and her group, and illegally, insisting that the case, now before the Tribunal, must be dropped at once; and if he could protect a Catherine Théot, it was asked, why not hundreds of innocent and illiterate, quite harmless creatures? Robespierre, however, would end terror only in his own way and at his own time, after the new distribution of wealth, the suppression of one class by another; and terror in its original form ceased not because the men who had slain him saw no further reason for it, now that French armies were victorious, but because the people looked on those men as their liberators from nightmare. Fouché, Tallien and their allies were

driven, and in spite of themselves, to pose as anti-terrorists. The evil spell was broken. Paris would have no more of such horrors, now unnecessary. Prisoners other than dangerous royalists were set free, week by week; and men came from hiding, able now to breathe as citizens after having almost choked in squalid lairs as possible suspects. Soon there were cries for vengeance; and in the ensuing months the Thermidorians, not yet ready to submit outright to a complete reversal of policy, were in conflict.

The moderates fought for a lead in the Convention, repealed the Law of Prairial, reconstituted the Revolutionary Tribunal, impeached Fouquier-Tinville; the two main Committees, Thermidorian in tone, were reorganised anew later, together with the subsidiary Committees, reduced in number, power being distributed once more; and the privileges of the representatives on mission were curtailed. The city Clubs and the Societies in the country were under restrictions and a close scrutiny; the revolutionary Committees, also reduced, in Paris and the Departments, were made relatively innocuous, and Sansculottes ceased to have part in them. The Commune did not escape in this general readjustment, though the Sections could yet tease government on subsequent occasions and for various reasons; but insurrection had suffered a mortal blow. The Thermidorians, or anti-Montagnards, incapable of having undisputed sway in the Convention, had life enough to vex the Plain. There was no sturdy government, no central power, no definite policy, no working Constitution for many months; and Paris rioted in pleasure, reacting hysterically after the gloom of a Republic of virtue, terror and the Supreme Being. The *jeunesse dorée*, gilded youth, swarmed in the streets, with a badge of mourning for victims of the Terror, and knobsticks for the skulls of resisting Sansculottes and red-bonnets; and they danced and gamed and whored, and many a severe republican no doubt

regretted the austerities, if not the blood-repressions, of pre-Thermidorian days.

The man striving earnestly and desperately to found a new social order, with all its connotations and based on fraternity and the abolition of all rich and poor, had helped unwittingly to sour the idealism of the Revolution; soured himself by misery, as a youth; and endeavour seemed lost in Paris for a time after his death, as if the early and ennobling spirit of the Revolution had died with him. The licence and extravagance of pre-Revolution days appeared again, a new rich having succeeded the old privileged aristocracy, new sores being in process of growth for the lancet of a military dictator; who would step forward at his appointed hour and transform the Revolution into the First Empire. Robespierre had failed lamentably, though avid to save France, aching at his heart to be honourable and just, strict in his probity; and he died, not yet forty, leaving less than twenty guineas: no venality in him.

Napoleon also meant to save France, and hungered to possess the wealth of the world, he also a man of the Revolution with his dreams of a new social order and his gospel, though not according to Rousseau.

## PART III

### CHAPTER I

#### EUROPE AND THE REVOLUTION

THE statesmen of old Europe were said to have the habit of cutting up and gnawing into states and kingdoms as if they were so many Dutch cheeses. They had watched France, hating and envying her generation by generation, sore from her armies, intrigues, coalitions in the days of Louis XIV; and they contrived partly to rope France, always mistrusting her, and at length exulted in her sharp descent to bankruptcy and woe toward the end of the eighteenth century. The Revolution seemed to announce the downfall of France as a power in Europe, and offered a field for skilful and extensive robbery.

Pitt had begun his work as Prime Minister in a season of difficulty and peril at home and abroad for England; and though he gained by his foreign policy five years later, concluding the Triple Alliance, England, Holland, Prussia, there were greater difficulties and perils in store; heartbreak and early death for Pitt when the battle of Austerlitz split the reactionary coalitions built so laboriously and expensively by him. That Triple Alliance, a supposed guarantee of European peace, with Great Britain supreme, hoped to dictate international law; yet, as most alliances in the insidious political history of the world, it carried the seed of future misery and death, England's relation to Holland being the final cause of war on France in 1793 by a nation once neutral if not friendly, and under the young statesman who had originally aimed for peace and quiet, preventing wars among European nations by his genius. Prussia was uneasy and hungry; Russia



peered at Poland and the Orient like a prodigious hawk; Austria, also hawklike, wavered and hovered, kept in leash by sedition among her diverse and quarrelsome peoples; and the smaller powers were restless and afraid.

The States General met at Versailles about a year after the formation of the Triple Alliance, and men of discernment saw that an incalculable national uprising would shake old Europe to its bones; for the French Revolution, rampant to establish liberty and political equality, made bold challenge to all arbitrary monarchs and oligarchies, at first announcing higher laws than most statesmen had dared to promulgate, stirring revolt among peoples by example and contagion. France, apparently about to collapse, had recreated herself, disturbing the balance of power, threatening to subvert all established authorities if she were successful with her new energies at home and her new ideas abroad, though Europe, quite sceptical, was not at once seriously alarmed. The French government, offering to help nations large and small to liberty, followed her own revolution logic, and roused Europe, though England remained aloof, safe for a while in her insulation from close contact with revolution, frightened only when commercial interests were jeopardised, and French propaganda, and propaganda by conquest, proved that the old France had not entirely disappeared in the new.

The French alliance with Spain, the Bourbon *pacte de famille*, forced the National Assembly to decide whether revolutionary France should acknowledge Bourbon obligations, war between England and Spain being imminent over Nootka Sound. Pitt wished at once to reprove Spain and to avoid war with Spain and France in alliance; and he schemed to persuade the National Assembly, by unknown shady methods, all the correspondence involved having vanished at the time. George III approved of Pitt's design, while declaring that no encouragement must be given by

England to forward the internal policy of French democrats. Revolutionary France did not acknowledge Bourbon pacts, Spain made compromise with England, and that particular war-cloud evaporated. Soon after, Britain was entangled with Russia, Turkey, Austria, Prussia, almost at war with Russia presently; and Pitt again extricated himself, war being unpopular at home. The British minister at the Hague wrote to Grenville saying it was wonderful to him that any man possessing any object whatever of honour, property, or security, in any established government under the sun, could incline to add to the confusion of the world at such a moment; for internal tranquillity seemed to him to be a consideration which, with the example of France before them, ought to supersede all others. . . . War ended between Russia and Turkey; and the relations between England and France were seemingly tolerable.

England recognised the Constitution of 1791; and when invited to join a coalition between Austria, Prussia, indignant German Princes noisy and not braced to fight, and other enemies of France and of each other, England refused. A year later, war having begun, the French government wanted England to act on behalf of peace; and Chauvelin, the French ambassador at London, learned that King George, anxious for peace, could not interfere, unless appealed to by all the nations concerned. This attitude of neutrality did not long survive August 10. Louis went to prison, and the English ambassador at Paris went home. Chauvelin offered to present his new credentials to the British government, and had curt refusal. He remained in London, afraid that if he begged to present letters of recall, the King would refuse to see him and a rupture between the two countries might ensue, the position at the moment being dark but not irreparable, French policy of conciliation with England not having yet lapsed; though France, overrunning Belgium, had opened the Scheldt

for navigation, menacing Holland, to whom such navigation belonged by old treaty. The notion of opening the Scheldt had not been repugnant to England formerly, when other interests were at stake; and the French government promised that no injury should be done to Dutch rights, the curious and disquieting reason for possession of the Scheldt being to the effect that the river had its source in France, that a nation having attained its liberty could not admit a system of feudalism nor surrender to it. England had no just cause for war in the matter of the Scheldt; but French propaganda, raids on neighbours and conquest-designs so familiar to Europe, had become questions only soluble by war. The parlous situation of Louis afforded an additional pretext for European agitation. British commercialists saw their interests endangered by France. Danton tried to interpret the declarations of the Legislative Assembly, sprung from revolutionary principle, in a fashion reassuring to England. Frenchmen, exhilarated by success in Belgium, and ready to steal from Dutch coffers, embroiled negotiations and helped to stoke war-fires. Chauvelin wrote to Grenville, now minister of Foreign Affairs, explaining that French decrees according fraternity and aid to all peoples who wished to recover liberty did not mean that the Republic would espouse the quarrels of a few seditious persons, or would incite disturbance in neutral countries, since the decree applied only to peoples who had known liberty; that France would not attack Holland if she were neutral; that the opening of the Scheldt could not be fairly regarded as a cause of war. Until January, 1793, the British government spoke of peace; and conversations took place with French emissaries, notably Maret and including Talleyrand; men who exerted themselves sturdily and above all to get England to recognise the Republic.

About the end of the month, news of Louis' execution astonished London. The next day Chauvelin

had word by Order in Council to leave the kingdom promptly. He answered that such dismissal would be taken as a pronouncement of war. Maret was again embarked for London, to announce Dumouriez, who would come on a friendly mission equal to an abandonment of any French designs on Holland. Chauvelin reached Paris and gave an account of his expulsion. Dumouriez had left on his pacific visit to England. He was overtaken by courier and told by his government to make for Holland. Consequently he did not cross the Channel. France declared war, as Chauvelin had foreseen, nominally responsible.

The policies of England and Revolutionary France were irreconcilable. France, Burke said, as extravagant in his rhetoric as the most fanatical of Jacobins, had a nursery for propaganda and sent her apostles to preach the blasphemous gospel to the world, and would forcibly convert all nations to her Declaration of Rights. Fox analysed the monumental hypocrisy of the coalition, the guile of the British Cabinet, who professed horror at a French invasion of Belgium and ignored the piratical invasion of Poland by Russians and Prussians. Burke had the wild applause of England, Fox was decried and insulted. England hoped and expected to gain considerably by war, otherwise there would have been no war with France at that hour. She aimed for Dunkirk, French colonies, and an extension of her own trade; declared herself at the first conference abroad with the Allies when Austrian Coburg spoke of no conquests, fancying that the powers had armed to restore French monarchy and to give an ordered peace to Europe; and politicians assembled spat abuse at him, silenced the innocent good fellow. They agreed to annex as much French territory as they could. King George said that France must be greatly circumscribed before he would think of negotiating with so dangerous and faithless a nation. That was England's war policy. Grenville had pro-

posed the actual dismemberment of France, tempting Austria with the frontier fortresses of Alsace and Lorraine, while Pitt supplied money, financing the whole coalition; and even the German Princes became warlike, able to fight, since now England would pay.

In the reign of Louis XVI the French navy had been reorganised and much strengthened; but the Revolution, with talk of equality, ruined discipline; and the resignation of numerous officers led to a general decline. Ships went into action ill-provisioned, ill-armed, only half manned. British ships outnumbered French ships; and at the outset of war, England had the moral support of the Spanish, Portuguese, Neapolitan and Dutch navies, all presumably acting in concert against France. And she had Nelson, Collingwood, Troubridge, Hood, St Vincent; one genius, and several illustrious admirals able to redeem the blunderings of the politicians, the corruption and muddle at the ports and dockyards. Her naval allies were of no outstanding practical use to her, and Spaniards and Dutch finally joined France, under compulsion, no one power being faithful to another. France and her foes were alike in their wars and reprisals: fire, steel, pillage, confiscations, atrocities; one nation seeking to blockade and to starve the other, British naval officers having been instructed that any ships carrying provisions to France must be captured, in disregard of national flags; that any ship caught trying to enter a French port must be taken and sold; and the British were more efficient at that sort of brigandage than the French. Otherwise England had little profit from the sea in 1793; for Toulon, with nearly half the naval resources of France, had been abandoned after a destructive occupation that at first seemed permanent; but, in the next year, the French dominions in India were annexed, and the Windward Islands, Martinique, Santa Lucia, Guadeloupe, though the French recaptured this last; and in the summer

Corsica became British, enforcing England's hold on the Mediterranean, though Corsica also reverted to the French. Howe fought Villaret-Joyeuse on June 1, when the *Vengeur* made romantic history for France. The immediate result appeared uncertain, Howe's victory being incomplete; nevertheless the British navy gained the ascendant that day, and did not lose it; and the series of resounding victories later, ending in Trafalgar, overthrew France as a sea-power.

Meanwhile France struggled on land, almost beaten, took the offensive after recovery; and prospered, though not conclusively, battles and great slaughter having proved to be only an introduction to the wars of Bonaparte, of Napoleon, ending at Waterloo. Europe had yet to wallow and groan, almost submerged in its own blood.

The battle of Neerwinden, and the defection of Dumouriez, had opened the Belgian frontier to the Austrians; and Coburg, with help from the Dutch, and an Anglo-Hanoverian army under the Duke of York, besieged the fortresses. Had there been unity of plan and a common purpose, and no inextricable tangle of dissensions, jealousies, hatreds and conflicting self-interests, the first coalition might have dictated terms from Paris and proceeded at leisure to slice France. The English coveted Dunkirk, and thither the Duke of York hastened, and there he stayed with his siege guns. Coburg, recovered from his innocence, sought prey elsewhere, intending to take possession of the frontier towns on his way to join the Prussians; who, having had a lesson at Valmy, hung suspended, as it were, in Luxembourg, all the allies being concerned with territory attractive to them. Carnot had time to organise his victories. French troops were soon away to relieve Dunkirk. The garrison, under Carnot's instruction, opened sluices, flooding the country, separating English and Hanoverians. The Duke of York withdrew, half his forces having been

defeated at Hondschoote; withdrew in haste and much physical and mental discomfort. Dunkirk did not become British. Coburg met disaster at Wattignies. Carnot now had his thirteen armies in movement, one in reserve, two being engaged with Spain, a third on the Italian frontier, a fourth on the Rhine, a fifth in Flanders. The Duke of York suffered again, in May, at Tourcoing; fled again; and he narrowly escaped a court-martial for his pains. In the following month, France won the battle of Fleurus. The Allies had to accept what seemed to them a miracle: tottering, convulsed France had shown that there was old sap in her, and a vitalising new spirit, a faith to move immense army corps to victory, an ideal of liberty not yet strangled in the devilry of war and the greed of a war-lord. And so the allied offensive collapsed.

The Prussians had consented to sell themselves to England and English ambitions. Shortly before Fleurus, however, an heroic and futile insurrection of Polish patriots quickened Prussia into other activities, and Austria foresaw that Prussia would leave the Rhine and seek advantage over her in Poland. Pitt added to his offers, arranged for further subsidies; and he ceased to bargain when Prussia began to treat with France, disclosed Austrian military plans to the French, then retired from war. Austria had been cozened of a share when Russia and Prussia signed the treaty for the second partition of Poland; and Austria eventually negotiated with Russia to partition or annex Poland, Turkey, Venice, Bavaria, if they could. Russian, Prussian and Austrian turbulence and imbroglios continued, Austria cozened Prussia, Russian interests having squared with Austrian interests. Austria and Prussia were nearly at war with one another over annexations and indemnities, Russia had mastership of Poland; and the three nations at last harmonised in their robberies and arranged a third partition, extinguishing Poland, the treaty being signed in 1797.

Austria and Prussia, balked of spoils in France by a nation in arms, accordingly and momentarily soothed themselves with booty in Poland. And a treaty had been signed in 1790 guaranteeing the integrity of Poland!

These iniquities and treacheries in the wrangling long march to fulfilment had determined the fate of the first coalition against France. In the treaty of Basel, 1795, Prussia reluctantly agreed to allow France to have much of her way on the left bank of the Rhine, France consenting in return to honour a line of demarcation that put northern Germany under Prussian control. Holland, in submission to France, begged peace from the *Comité de Salut public* and had to accept dependence on France, saving French credit, giving France the Dutch navy, free entry into Germany, and the right to enlist Holland in war against England. Pitt's elaborate policy had come to utter grief. A treaty between France and Spain followed. The reputed death of the young Dauphin, Louis XVII, eased the way for this Spanish peace, Spain having formerly insisted on a Bourbon restoration; in addition, French troops were threatening northern Spain, war was unpopular in Spain, and the Queen hoped to save her minister and lover, Godoy, from disgrace. Godoy became the Prince of Peace, France having agreed to renounce her Spanish conquests, receiving the Spanish half of San Domingo as compensation; and before the end of the year, Saxony, the two Hesses, Portugal, Naples, the Duke of Parma, and the bewildered Pope, had in turn made a patchwork peace. France, for a time, had only two direct enemies in Austria and Sardinia, and the more subtle and tortuous enmity of England, to meet. Austria also might have been brought to terms in the autumn; but the French general Pichegru entered into secret negotiations with the enemy, bribed heavily, and promised that his army should be used to overthrow the French government.



Therefore he refrained from crushing Austria, and betrayed his own men, retreating. France had to be content with a Franco-Austrian armistice, and hostilities were suspended for the winter.

France had overcome Belgium, Holland, Savoy, Rhineland; Prussia and Spain had been forced to make peace; and though England gained at sea and stole French colonies, she was shamed militarily, and morally, if moral shame could be possible for any power at a time of general demoralisation in politics and statesmanship. New combinations were in slow process of formation. France had ceased to be at war with the old system of conquest, national aggrandisement, balance of power diplomacy; for in seeking to resist her enemies she had lost her idealism, the early spirit of the Revolution having been defeated in its strength, the victor vanquished by the thing it had meant to destroy. A new Triple Alliance, England, Austria and Russia, soon faced her, and with new designs for plunder, Austria being determined to pay for her losses in the Low Countries by further annexations in Italy, Russia hoping to indemnify herself in Turkey, having reached her limits in Poland, vexed with Prussia and the maiming of her schemes by the treaty of Basel; and England would make no peace while France aimed for spoliation and glory. France had drawn near to the threshold of new history, the age of Bonaparte, when ideas and ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity withdrew to a far background. Much, however, had yet to happen before the young soldier became an Emperor, fulfilling his tragic destiny, as the rest of French Revolution men.



CARRIER

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## CHAPTER II

### CARRIER; AND THE PROVINCIAL TERROR

#### I

AFTER Robespierre's death, the revulsion of popular feeling against the more ferocious of the men who had risen to authority only because they were needed to bring rebellious districts to submission, alarmed the Thermidorians and was at length irresistible; and trials in Paris revealed a catalogue of atrocities that led to a demand for reprisals. Carrier, the promoter of *fusillades*, when men were shot in batches, and of *noyades*, when folk were drowned in batches, thus on his mission at Nantes during the Vendean civil war, could be pitied only inasmuch as the weight of contumely fell on him, others of the band who had exasperated Robespierre by their methods being allowed to escape. Carrier was a poor, unhappy fellow, incontrovertibly a knave, lean in his wits, probably insane at times, the kind of man who could expect notice when humanity had been stirred to the lees; and he had few defenders whilst he lived, and none after.

His father, a seemly, comfortable man respected by his neighbours, had a small rural tenement at Yolet, in Upper Auvergne, and here Carrier was born in March, 1756, third in a progeny of five. The landlord of the property, a Marquis, had an amiable interest in the Carriers, a relative of the family being his chaplain; and young Carrier visited the château, grateful to the Marquis, his wife and daughters, for kindness; and perhaps he may have saved the lady from the guillotine, not always vicious in his late manhood. The influence of the chaplain, and of the Marquis, led the Carriers to send their son to a Jesuit

college at Aurillac, for they hoped to make a priest of him. He had intelligence, and industry; a fellow quiet, often sullen, greedy enough to cause astonishment at table; and in the course of years he disappointed his patrons and his family, announcing doggedly that he would not be a priest. He left college to become a minor clerk in an advocate's office; diligent, not without skill. A writer who had known the young man said the advocate dismissed him on account of forgery; but the charge was made at a season when Carrier shouldered his own sins, and the sins of others, anyone pleased to fling stones and filth being at liberty so to do, assured of approval. Carrier left his master when a royal edict chanced to affect the advocate, considerably reducing his functions and clients. The young man went to the Paris University, studied law, and returned to Aurillac; where he became an advocate, and spouse of a merchant's daughter, took his place among the professional men of the town, something of a puzzle to them; for the occasional gloomy quiet of the boy had matured, his sharp little eyes were restless, often dreamy, his voice was harsh, his talk sometimes impetuous and rash, his dress careless. There were obscurities in the man, an inward disquiet, no singleness or certainty of aim, nothing to excite inordinate repulsion nor to draw affectionate interest; and his greediness led to intemperance now, and he showed some violence in his cups; otherwise attending to his legal work, cunning, excessively prudent, timid when sober.

Shortly before the death of the chaplain, Carrier's former patron, the two were unfriendly, disputes having arisen over a loan. The executors urged payment, and were amazed when Carrier let them see a document that bequeathed much money to himself. The authenticity of the signature was contested. Writing experts favoured Carrier, and he left the court free. Men accused him in secret of forgery, very likely with

truth now, though here again the final reputation of the man spread to his past and he could not claim the benefit of a doubt. He had applied himself to his profession, developing a practice, notorious for wrath against the nobles, if they were involved in process; a wrath fed and envenomed in the months preceding the States General. Carrier had resolved many of his doubts, a hot revolutionary at this stage, a pot-house democrat, his sullenness and voracity, his pride and rancour, focussed at last, his aims definite.

The news of the Bastille fall incited a popular rising against old authority at Aurillac, and the lawyer in Carrier made place for the now and again drunken demagogue. Clubs were inaugurated and took instruction from Paris. Carrier, soon an extremist, gained prestige as a fellow uncompromising and noisy, elaborating his vehement theories as power in Paris shifted from one centre to another and the Commune began to dictate to the Assembly. Such a man would have had few chances of scrambling to office if the intelligent men of the Third Estate had successfully resisted the encroachments of the Fourth Estate. Aurillac and its districts reflected the moods of Paris, August 10 nourished excitement and the rage against *émigrés*, royalists, and many priests; and Carrier, with a new intoxication, whip to his already diseased nerves, clung to opportunity, sang his praise of the Sansculottes, who alone might carry him to eminence, and was sent to the National Convention, electors formerly having taken no serious note of him; nor had he imagined himself eligible for the National or the Legislative Assembly.

He sat with the Montagnards at the Convention: a man at a quick glance all arms and legs, his narrow shoulders bent, face long, angular, with prominent cheek-bones and hair-tufts, eyes yellow and bloodshot and sunk in deep pits, the nose keen at the ridge, pinched at the nostrils, lips thick and drooping, the

underlip projecting, chin shallow, his skin the colour of copper, ears set far back, large, unshapely, his body as lean and nervous as the face; and his high, shrill voice was guttural in his tempers, words seeming to come from his bowels. He proved to be almost negligible as an orator, yet pert and nimble during argument, immoderate in word and gesture, denouncing all enemies of the Republic. When voting on Louis' punishment, he said that proofs of conspiracy were visible to him; and so, Death! He proposed a Revolutionary Tribunal with machinery fit only for a Law of Prairial, heard his suggestions modified, spoiled to him; and doubtless he owed his selection for work on mission to his presumptuous diatribes and wild sallies against traitors, renegades, spies, war-profiteers. The exigencies of the moment had made it possible for him to leave Aurillac as a deputy; and presently and again the exigencies of the moment sent him back to the Departments.

He and a colleague left Paris to deal with rebellion and to root out sedition.

## II

The Girondin uprisings collapsed, though Lyons withstood siege for a time, Girondins and royalists making joint cause; but rebellion in the West menaced the very existence of the Revolution, almost as disastrous as invasion, responsible for the Terror. The Bretons, illiterate and unteachable in democracy, were ready to fight and to die for a King; the Vendéans were Catholic, subject to non-juring priests, and out to make war for what they called religious freedom; and all were fanatical, soon to behave like savages. The Breton La Rouerie had organised a peasant rising from the Seine to the Loire for the spring of 1793. That attempt failed in immediate effect, and led to the Chouannerie, guerilla warfare, continuing for years,

dwindling, breaking out in 1815, contributing to the fall of Napoleon; who sent troops against the Chouans and grievously weakened his forces at Waterloo. The Vendean civil war began in March, when the peasants between the Loire and the sea and from Nantes to Poitiers, already offended by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, rose spontaneously against a conscription forced on them. The priests sanctified the cause, named rebels the Catholic, the Christian Army; and aristocrats, uninterested at first, assuming such a peasant rabble must come to speedy grief, wanted to lead when successes were gained. The Vendéans opened their campaign with isolated attacks on country towns, defeating young recruits and unskilled National Guards; and they massacred over five hundred prisoners, used torture, for this was religious war. In two months they nearly swept the whole country of republican troops: a hundred thousand peasants now in arms, undisciplined, unpaid, going to their cottages and holdings at will, gathering again when the bells of their parishes sounded the alarm. They took Saumur in June, won command of the Loire, of arms, ammunition; pillaging, yet torturing and massacring as they and their furies advanced; and they designed to extend revolt in Brittany, Normandy, and Maine, to march on Paris, centring on Nantes as the prelude to that heroic adventure. The Nanteans, loyal to the Republic, defended themselves with a tenacity and bravery equal to the attack, won a most bloody day, and perhaps saved Republican France, though civil war went on, ever more barbarous, fortunes varying, battle following battle. The republicans suffered from the incompetence and stupidities of inferior generals leading *colonnes infernales*, infernal columns, devastating bodies properly named; the rebels from jealousies and enmities among their peasant and aristocratic leaders.

The first resounding success had been won by the



Vendeans at Cholet, in the heart of La Vendée; and here they were beaten in October, again after a desperate and prolonged struggle. They formed anew, had further sporadic gains, perishing gradually as a cause, betrayed among themselves, and by Pitt; who had promised help if they could occupy a seaport. They attacked Granville, and were routed; and so once more at Angers, reduced to an infuriated hungry remnant of an army, decimated at Savenay about the end of the year; and rebellion degenerated into skirmishes, almost ceased for the time being with the treaty of La Jaunaie, early in 1795, when the Vendeans had religious liberty and were exempt from conscription. Meanwhile *Tribunals* and *Commissions militaires* dealt with prisoners, summarily as a rule, here and there horribly.

Carrier journeyed West with his colleagues when rebellion had reached an apex and terror was about to answer terror in a war of extermination. He visited Normandy and Brittany, using his power, reporting to the Paris Committee; returning to Paris, to journey again; and he had been relatively mild with prisoners so far. At Nantes, however, the difficulties and peril of the situation overwhelmed him in his unwisdom and incapacity. He reached the town in the autumn of 1793. Here, he wrote, surveying the field, treason had been allowed to organise itself. He and his masters, he thought, could afford to be humane only when assured of victory. He did not stay long on his first visit, travelled elsewhere, overlooking the generals, making his requisitions and confiscations for the army; a feeble imitation of Saint-Just, though immensely proud, confident in his illusions as an administrator. He saw the battle of Cholet at the start, and boasted after of having a horse shot under him as he stemmed the flight of cowardly Frenchmen. Probably no one believed him; indeed there was evidence to suggest that he fled in panic, on through the town, and hid

and trembled until he could stride in safety, announce victory to patriots, and spread consternation among the counter-revolutionaries. All would be well, he wrote; but frightful examples were requisite.

The *Comité de Salut public* decided that two of the five men on mission in the district should remain with the army, one at Saumur, one at Nantes, one at a proper centre whence he might correspond readily with the others. Carrier arranged to accept those central duties in October, making Nantes his headquarters for the next four months; where he housed like a general with a dispersed staff, already trammelled by a homicidal mania shamming justice. He had his several prisons filled, and spied for men, women, children, soldiers, priests, for anyone suspected of conspiracy who could be drawn into the net. The women, he wrote, spurred by the priests, had fomented and were upholding the Vendean war; had caused the shooting of prisoners, fighting with the brigands, killing detached republican volunteers in the villages. He chose men of the local republican Societies agreeable to his purpose, had a Revolutionary Tribunal in the town, approved of a *Compagnie Marat* created on demand of the revolutionary Committee, his immediate staff, and composed of members also agreeable to his purpose, affined to him in murderous intent, his colleague supporting him in all measures, signing with him the decree whereby any of the *Compagnie Marat* could make domiciliary visits, order arrests, and send victims to the revolutionary Committee, warrants being unessential, likely to waste time and to delay justice.

A group of young men, irresponsible and zealous, were his more intimate satellites, influencing him against their personal enemies as well as suspects, crippling through him the administrative bodies hitherto in office and repugnant to them, provisioning new drastic authority; and they flattered and cajoled Carrier, and derided him tacitly, aware of his limitations and

indolence, his timidities, ignoble and degrading foibles, applauding his buffooneries; for the man had a lumbering joy in him when drunk. He did not trust them, had no affection for them; they were dandies, and he preferred to hobnob with Sansculottes. Hence Nantes was at the mercy of a few elegant or vulgar fellows little better than ruffians, led by a man with no real talent, no true insight, who could not impose a reasoned, deliberate will and would not willingly forgo a shred of his power. All the constituted authorities had been regenerated, he wrote to the Committee at Paris, unpopular Societies and doubtful groups were dissolved, federalists, royalists, Feuillants and the monopolists in the hands of national justice; and the apostleship of reason enlightened the good sense of patriots and raised them to the level of the Revolution; prejudice, superstition, fanaticism, had vanished in the flame of philosophy! He ended with the casual remark that an event of a *genre nouveau* had reduced the number of priests.

About ninety priests, taken to a ketch in the river Loire, had been stuffed in the hold and left with the rats and their own dirt to starve until preparations were ready for their drowning; for *déportation verticale*. The majority, old men, feeble, ill, foes to the Republic, had foolishly expressed their hope in rebellion during recent imprisonment. They were duly roped in pairs and flung into an old flat-bottom lighter. Carrier's men scuttled that lighter on a November night. A few priests contrived to free themselves, and were thrust in struggle or washed from the covered hold through the scuttle-holes, came to the surface. They tried to swim, and were clubbed with boat-hooks, oars, and sank again. In the ensuing days, bodies were stranded on the shores of the river, and the Nanteans whispered in their homes, or shouted with the popular Societies, of this *événement d'un genre nouveau*, this new and original event, as Carrier had

phrased it in that intentionally vague reference to the Committee; for he was uncertain of himself and the effect on his masters of preliminary experiment in group-execution, managed by his squad, inspired by himself.

In order to prevent communication between rebel-bands on one and the other shore, he gave word that boats must be destroyed; and, to famish the Vendean, that all provisions found in the insurgent country must be sent to Nantes. Starve, drown, burn, kill: that was the avenging gospel according to Carrier, and in answer to a like Vendean gospel. Day by day, prisoners were brought to the town; and a hundred and thirty-two Nantean citizens, notables, prey for the parent Tribunal, had been sent to Paris, about a score of them dying on the journey. The Nantes Tribunal, and the guillotine, "*le rasoir national*," Carrier said, could not keep pace with multitudinous supplies. Contagious disease made lazar-houses of the densely-crowded prisons, and might soon infect the town. Carrier raged at the delay in emptying prisons, faced with a grave administrative problem, the hour having arrived when, in his opinion, *grandes mesures* must follow. He continued to hesitate, no doubt anxious to avoid direct responsibility, unready to be too exact in his commands, the wariness and cunning of the Aurillac advocate having revived in his unhappy spirit, some last grains of conscience maybe interfering with his peace. He scolded his committees, quarrelling, and hinting that they lacked the patriotic courage to begin on a massacre of prisoners. The revolutionary Committee bestirred itself in consequence, and gave order to the Commandant of the town. He must supply three hundred men, dispatch them in two companies to the prisons specified, there to seize victims named on lists accompanying the order; who must be tied in couples, driven to an appointed place, and shot. The Commandant refused. Carrier threat-

ened him and his supporters, and did nothing for the moment, losing nerve when resisted firmly, though soon to proceed with his *grandes mesures*. His Committee now showed more resolution and pleased Carrier, dealing with those victims by *noyade*; a hundred and twenty-nine of them, one of whom escaped.

## III

The *émigrés*, in their private correspondence and public utterance, were assuring each other that there was only one effective way of dealing with democracy: annihilation. They must march on Paris, spreading terror, since revolution could be suppressed only by terror; by measures worthy of Nero and Caligula. Such measures were considered wise by a few republicans in the suppressing of counter-revolutionaries and rebellion; by representatives at Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Brest, Toulon; by Carrier at Nantes, when he had his machinery at last ready for action, not to be thwarted a second time. Lyons had been invested early in August, starved in September, taken in October. Couthon was sent with orders to raze the town; and he had objection to such lunacy, wanting to curb reprisals and not to excite them. He disappointed his masters, went home, and was succeeded by Fouché, Collot d'Herbois, and chosen troops of the revolutionary army. Fouché, a dechristianiser, and an advanced democrat at this moment, at once decreed that old and poor folk in and about Lyons, and all orphans, should be lodged, fed, clothed at the expense of the rich; mendicity and idleness must cease, and occupation would be found for the workless. The demolition of royalist and Girondin property went on, at heavy cost, until that particular form of barbarism lapsed. Here also the prisons were full, guillotines too slow in action; and so the *mitraillades*, when prisoners were

ranged between two parallel ditches, graves for them. The representatives on mission superintended the proceedings from a platform, and gave the signal. Cannon mowed the victims with grape-shot. But grape-shot did not always kill outright. Troops had to bayonet a writhing, screaming mass between those ditches. *Fusillades* were adopted, more certain in effect. At least sixteen hundred real and supposed enemies of liberty, equality and fraternity, of the Republic of Virtue, perished by these means before terror had done its work, and Fouché had stopped executions and arrests.

Carrier showed more ingenuity, less boldness, if such distinctions could be drawn in a matter of holocaust; and his difficulties were great. The prisons overflowed, and prisoners from La Vendée were yet entering the town. Now they were sent to the Entrepôt, a commodious building originally used as a warehouse for colonial produce, and able to cage thousands in misery and filth: a clearing-station for Carrier, and near to the river and the quarries, facilitating *noyades* and *fusillades*, the need for carnage, he thought, being peremptory, famine in the town, typhus and cholera in the prisons, having become alarming. After the battle of Savenay, the Entrepôt was a hell where men and women and children, drawn from an army in rout, and a hundred villages, crawled and swarmed; and many of them died and rotted among the rest before they could be found innocent or guilty, set free, drowned, shot, guillotined. The stench of the place was diffused through the town.

Carrier gave new ardour to his revolutionary Committee and the underlings. *Fusillades* at the quarries were expensive and cumbersome; there was neither time nor labour enough to bury the dead promptly; hence further *noyades*, improved after early experiment. The Miracles of the Loire, Carrier named them in his reports to the Paris Committee; nor were

the victims only Vendean rebels as the method neared perfection and took precedence; and women with or without their shifts were included in the batches for drowning, and, once or twice, perhaps children. There were certainly seven major *noyades*, and there may have been over a score. Estimates gave the numbers as anything from two to four thousand deaths in the river, two thousand by *fusillade*, the lesser figure being doubtless the more correct. Most of the prey were robbed, many were stripped bare, all were bound at the wrists and in pairs; and those who by chance came to the surface, after the scuttling of these coffin-boats, were destroyed. Old accounts said that obscenity flavoured atrocities and spoke of Republican Marriages, *qui consistait à lier nus ensemble un jeune homme et une jeune fille et à les jeter à l'eau*. Carrier's men had little time to amuse themselves in such fashion, and no unquestionable record supported the charge. In one group collected for the guillotine there were four children. Carrier's assistants, relenting, appealed to him. He upbraided them. "*Tout comme les autres!*" he shouted, unwilling to make distinctions. One of the youngsters was too small for easy decapitation, and the knife split the head instead of severing the neck. Another group included young women; and the guillotine scene proved more than the executioner could bear that day, and he took to his bed.

Carrier himself probably lost his wits, the timidities of the man, the cruelties promoted by fear, having jangled his nerves and corroded his blood. He shut himself in his lodging, refused to see anyone other than his intimates, issuing orders by proxy: burn all the houses of the rebels, he said, kill all the occupants: and he solaced himself with brandy, and strumpets. When daring fellows broke in on his privacy, wanting direction, he leapt from his chair or his bed, drew a sword, raging and threatening until he had scared the intruders and driven them away; or he might

collapse and wail, suddenly afraid. His drinking and tragic clowneries increased as the days sped and his incompetence as an administrator wrought havoc in the neighbourhood; and he quarrelled with his committees, blaming subordinates, leaguings them in secret against him.

The *Comité de Salut public*, suspicious of its representatives when suspicion began to claw everybody, sent agents to the Departments to study and report on the situation. A young man, Jullien, Robespierre's friend, came to Nantes on service, and was shocked by the muddle and villainy. He protested at the popular Society, and to the Paris Committee; and he shocked Robespierre. Jullien saw Carrier menacing anyone who did not please him, and he made no effort to conceal his indignation. Carrier's men arrested him, took him to their chief. Carrier sat up in bed, railing, and swung his sword. When a man deceived the people, he said, and there might be danger in executing him publicly, other means could be used. Jullien spoke of redoubtable friends who would avenge his death. Carrier ceased to be outrageous, and at length ordered release. Jullien's later accounts of those days were contradictory, and he may have returned to the popular Society to denounce Carrier and repeat a tale of dread, urging the Society to address the Convention and to plead for the man's recall; or he posted from the town, ingloriously.

In the sequel, Robespierre insisted on Carrier's return; and Carrier himself begged the omnipotent Committee to release him, for he had wearied of quarrels, entanglement, confusion, and his own mal-administration, exhausted in mind and nerves, and in his blood. The Committee wrote, perhaps ironically, saying that his labours at Nantes entitled him to rest, and his colleagues in the Convention would greet him with pleasure; his health had suffered, the Committee had work for him, needed his word in conference on



his future. Now he had an enemy in Robespierre; and he had also friends who were able to save him from immediate punishment. And so ended large-scale atrocities at Nantes, the Revolutionary Tribunal and the *Commission militaire* showing themselves less vicious after his departure. He told the Convention that all the rebels on the right shore of the Loire were exterminated, and only a few thousand hid themselves on the left shore. He spoke of his work, admitting that children had perished; many young scamps carrying arms or acting as spies; also that anyone who had not fled from the Vendée to join the republican armies ought to die: they must kill all rebels, and without pity. The Convention heard him, did not openly rebuke him; and he may have enjoyed his rest in Paris for a time, complacent though watchful.

Provincial Terror held sway only and solely where rebellion had made slaughter, civil war massacre, and counter-revolution had frustrated and enraged the republicans. Many of the Criminal Tribunals escaped the charge of ferocity and madness, but few executions taking place; though here and there representatives on mission shouted and bullied, arresting refractory priests and suspected royalists, otherwise avoiding brutality, content to employ ridicule in place of the guillotine, as one of them said.

The large majority of the Departments, of Frenchmen, saw nothing of the Terror.

## IV

Had there been no rebellion, such men as Carrier would have lost themselves among deputies who came from the Departments to give their votes, to take a small part in one or other of the numerous Committees, and return to private life and obscurity when their Ayes and Nays were no longer in demand and other

mediocrities supplied the raw material of government. Carrier had no claim to notice in Revolution history, after Nantes, until the trial of the Notables from the town led to his trial; and then he regained a place only because the focussing of interest on him defined the changes in public sentiment after Thermidor. He hovered for a while on the skirts of the Hébertist movement, a Cordelier wanting insurrection, a holy insurrection as rejoinder to scoundrels, he said; and he managed adroitly to escape proscription when that faction went to its doom. He hated Robespierre, having roused the contempt and detestation of the Jacobin pontiff; but evidently his friendship with men in authority yet served him, whilst he did not overstep bounds. French territory was delivered from invading armies, revolts were crushed, seditions driven underground, and terror accordingly ended in the Departments, though not at Paris; and maybe the Law of Prairial finally slaked Carrier's passion for repressive measures. He had no important share in Thermidor, used his rusty voice to jeer and scream when the Montagnards prevented Robespierre from being heard; and he jostled with the crowd that followed the tumbrils and loaded Robespierre with insult and outrage, drawing notice by his continuous loud cry: "*Mort aux tyrans!*"

After Thermidor he raised his voice at the Jacobins against the widespread call for the punishment of terrorists, showed moderation and some guile at the Convention; yet almost to the end he could not fancy that he, Carrier, would be the scapegoat, besotted in his vinous conceits, free with his whimper and giggle, moral awareness dulled nearly to extinction in him. He knew disquiet though no serious alarm when one of the Nantean prisoners wrote a pamphlet signed by himself and others, had it smuggled to a printer, and circulated; for that pamphlet with the account of sufferings endured since the dispatch to Paris for trial

by Carrier's order, caught the imagination of Paris. Out of the men sent under escort, ninety-four were now alive, the others having died in misery and want. Public outcry for justice led to their trial before the new Revolutionary Tribunal. Cross-examination dramatically exposed the tale of Nantes, the prisoners were acquitted, the Nantean revolutionary Committee impeached. Carrier blamed his men of Nantes, denying complicity in *noyades* and *fusillades*, repeating that had he heard of such things he might have interfered. No one believed him, Press and public blazed at him; called for his trial when evidence against the Nantean committee men involved him more deeply. Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, Barère, saw that they too might be involved as terrorising members of the pre-Thermidorian *Comité de Salut public*, and they tried to shield Carrier during the debates in the Convention, and to implicate the main body of that Convention. The public followed events, loathing all that was foul in late Jacobinism, encouraging the *jeunesse dorée* and their knobsticks. Jacobins retaliated, fights ensued, and there was a mob attack on the Club. The Committees responsible for the police refused to help Jacobins or to stem popular agitation; and in November 1794 the Club was shut.

Debates advanced slowly to the inevitable decree against Carrier, men of the Convention in part morally accountable by their votes, and silence, for the work of Committee government being reluctant to surrender at once to the outcry, anxious to protect others when offering Carrier for judgment. A commission was appointed to make investigation and to report; and at last they agreed that Carrier must answer charges before the Convention. He asked for ten days in which to prepare his defence, and had refusal. He began the long and tedious argument by denials, talked of his own missions, of *noyades* at Saumur and at Angers due to other men on mission. He did not

wish to reproach those who thought they were serving the Republic in such a way; but why should he alone take blame? He spoke of Socrates, Brutus, others in history pursued unjustly; and at one point he lost his temper, grotesque in wild antics, as if he were at Nantes. He glared round and about him. He could see inhuman creatures who longed to drink his blood! Well! the wretches! if they wanted his life and his blood they could have it. . . . !

He was sent for trial, and stood with the Nantes revolutionary Committee, and others from the town; over thirty in all. The parade of witnesses, and interrogations, went on day by day, absorbing Paris, affording a comprehensive and instructive account of provincial terror; and prisoners accused one another in the effort to save themselves, insisting that they had been forced to obey orders. Carrier, in his last defensive speech, ceased to dodge and palter, while yet denying culpability. He told of atrocities committed by the Vendéans, as if he would so excuse his own imputed crimes; of a massacre when eight hundred patriots had been hacked to pieces by the rebels; of folk buried alive, nailed to house doors; men suspended from trees by the feet, heads over slow fires; of other abominations. Then he appealed to the jury, saying he was exhausted, weary, beseeching justice; that his rectitude had been affirmed in an address from his Department. He spoke for his fellow-prisoners: if national justice must crush someone, let it weigh on him alone! He and two others were sentenced to death, the rest set free, held not responsible.

Hours after, the acquitted in their joy gathered together to feast. Several left the table and went to the place of execution to see Carrier die. The knife failed to act promptly on the first victim trussed for death. Carrier had yet another horror to study as he waited. He stepped to the plank manfully when his turn came. And the crowd shouted: "*À bas les assassins!*"

The release of the Nantes terrorists evoked another storm in Paris, and the men who had feasted while Carrier was on his last journey found themselves in prison again, taken to Angers; where, after postponements of a second trial, and much apprehension and wretchedness, they had profit from the general amnesty and were set free when the Convention came to an end. Carrier had paid for them, for others, and for the great burden of his own sins; yet another who, but for the Revolution, might have lived out his provincial life, not distinguished, not utterly barren in his profession; or he might have shamed himself undramatically, since his probity was doubtful in the early days, and he enjoyed low company and strong liquor. Indeed, before Carrier's Revolution work dis-tempered his mind and brutalised his senses, and fear made him cruel, he may have been more amiable when drunk than sober, roystering with sailors and market-porters, jovial with peasants, fraternising happily. No snobbery in Carrier, the loud-mouthed democrat more at his cheerful ease in a pot-house than in a drawing-room, more human with a baggage than with prudish clients and perhaps his wife.

Circumstance took him to high office, on a sudden and unexpectedly, and he lost his balance, could not recover, strutting to confusion, floundering to death. He masked his shallowness and timidity by a pitiful bravado, and may have had enough intelligence in his rare moments of quiet to be sick with himself, not character enough to amend. He bemused himself, feeding his moral sores, dreading reality; a poor theatrical image tormented and damned; for again and again he behaved like a maniac at Nantes, though cunning, soaked in brandy and in blood, atavistic in the exercise of his duties as a proconsul; and he had his nightmares, alone or with his trulls, howling

like an animal. He and his crew debased the Revolution and themselves; and had they not been useful to illustrate the extremes to which the doctrine of political and military necessity might lead human beings at a time of national danger and panic, they would have made a proper study only for the pathologists. The *noyades*, *fusillades* and *mitrailleurs* of the Revolution roused aversion when men had ceased to be afraid, events were seen in perspective, and the supposed need to strike terror, a need driving men to cruelties by fear and in the hope of restoring order and bringing peace, could be appraised calmly. Terror had sincere advocates at the time of the Revolution, and after; and France conquered her enemies more often in spite of terror than because of it.

The trial and death of Carrier and the re-imprisonment of his auxiliaries partly slaked the thirst for reprisals against the more flagrant of the terrorists, and Fouché, Collot d'Herbois and others of that band had defenders and escaped. The reaction after arbitrary Committee government continued, though Lindet made a notable apology for the severities of the great Committee. The Revolution had been fulfilled, he said, the work of all; and they had wrestled with difficulties, as all men hurled to an infinite distance from ordinary life. Would anyone demand an account of manœuvres from a captain who had reached port after saving his ship from dreadful tempest, or enquire if he had followed instructions? Common sense and the public good ought to prevent deputies from glancing backward at obstacles surmounted. Let them look solely to the future, concerned only with the national welfare. . . . The Convention applauded him. Yet the moderates could not forbear raking in the past. Meanwhile they secured the release of deputies who had protested against the June insurrection of 1793; but France had no ascendant party able to take a strong, permanent lead, and the Convention seemed little better than so

much parliamentary wreckage. The reinstalled deputies, the only representatives free from any participation or acquiescence in the Terror, had help from Girondins, formerly outlaws, now amnestied, and they endeavoured to control the Convention, stern against Montagnards. The remains of Marat were expelled from the Pantheon. Billaud-Varenne, Barère, and Collot d'Herbois had been arrested. Billaud and Collot were deported to Cayenne; Barère, sent to prison, managed finally to escape. Fouquier-Tinville failed in his plea that he had been a tool in the hands of others, and was guillotined, together with some of the old Revolutionary Tribunal judges and jurymen; and others were tried.

About this time, in the spring, 1795, Germinal, the Jacobins had attempted to provoke trouble in support of their friends; and they besieged the Convention, called for Bread, for harsh measures against royalists, for an end to the prosecution of republicans. The National Guard protected the deputies, and promise was made to feed Paris; a promise ignored after. A second insurrection, in May, Prairial, was less easy to subdue. An armed mob invaded the Convention, and after scuffle, to and fro movement, shot a deputy, stuck his head on a pike, masters of the Convention, temporarily. Again they called for Bread, and now for the Constitution of 1793. Many deputies withdrew, afraid. At night, the Montagnards decreed a number of popular measures, and there was talk of a *Commission extraordinaire* of four members, the establishment of a provisional government. The official executive gathered enough middle-class National Guards to clear the chamber; and over a dozen Montagnards were in due course arrested. The next day, the insurgents met at the Hôtel de Ville, preparing another attack. The moderates again promised Bread to the people, the repeal of laws restoring confiscated property, a report from the *Comité de Constitution*; and they soothed the crowd. The Convention had

secretly summoned troops under General Menou, a tepid republican, thus appealing to the regular army; and at length they quelled insurrection; the last of any magnitude, save one. They arrested about sixty Montagnards, condemned six to death by *Commission militaire*. One of the six, as they descended the stairs after judgment, said that folk should see how a man of heart knew how to die. He stabbed himself. Another plucked the knife from the breast of his friend, stabbed himself. Another used a scissor-blade. The knife passed on until the six had attempted suicide. Three were dead; three were dying when taken to the guillotine. The Girondins had at last triumphed, and with them the Third Estate.

The Revolutionary Tribunal ceased to exist; the National Guard was cleansed of Sansculottes, and the Convention appointed a guard of regular troops for its own protection. Royalists began to revive, *émigrés* to return. A White Terror in the South made a butchery of republicans at Avignon, Arles, Marseilles, Aix, Tarascon, Lyons; there was suppression of republicans at Toulon, and excited resistance to the Republic in Paris; and a massacre of *émigrés* after their landing from British ships at Quiberon and the collapse of that luckless, most futile expedition. The government won but scant public sympathy in its many troubles. The treaty of Basel had been signed four days after the insurrection of Germinal; but war had not ended, and the people wanted peace, the end of social and economic misery, a good Constitution. The executive, teased with the double peril from terrorists and royalists, did not take steps decisive enough to please anyone, as embarrassed in prospect by a return of the armies as by the present impoverished situation at home, knowing themselves discredited, quarrelling among themselves, unable to govern firmly or wisely. They appointed a Committee to draft a new Constitution, number Four, hopeful that here at



last a means would be discovered of creating a republican executive able to cope with disorder, to establish a general peace, stabilise the gains of the Revolution, redeem the iniquities and follies of the past, and fashion a new and tranquil France.

The Committee reported late in June, debates began, and a Constitution was adopted by the Convention in August; a Constitution soundly bourgeois, artfully planned to evade the flaws and anomalies of its precursors, establishing the Third Estate, damaging the equality worshipped by Robespierre, though leaving room for liberty, so far as liberty could be secured by any government at that hour. A Declaration of Duties balanced a truncated Declaration of Rights, and articles separated Church and State and established as much religious freedom as seemed compatible with republican law. The suffrage excluded indigent citizens, making old and hateful distinctions, electoral colleges were restricted to men who had residence and paid taxes; and there was a property qualification, suppressed later, for members of the legislative body. There would be two Councils forming the *Corps législatif*, elected for a term of three years, one-third of the members retiring each year: the *Conseil des Cinq-Cents*, the Five Hundred, and the *Conseil des Anciens*, the Ancients, two hundred and fifty of them, the one elected by the Primary Assemblies, the other from and by the entire legislative body. The *Cinq-Cents* alone could make laws, the *Anciens* had the right of a one year's veto; and no man under forty, and no bachelor, could be an *Ancien*, hence priests were ruled out. The executive consisted of five Directors in this bicameral timocracy, chosen by the *Anciens* from a list presented by the *Cinq-Cents*; and the Directory had control of the six ministers named by them, wide powers save in the matter of finance, though they were forbidden to command troops in person, could be impeached, and one Director must retire annually.

Sittings were to be public, spectators limited, no processions must invade the chambers; and the *Anciens* could change the town of meeting if they so willed. Members were protected against accusation, and had a guard of fifteen hundred, no other troops being allowed to advance within prescribed bounds. Property was guaranteed, confiscated properties of *émigrés* and clergy irrevocably ensured to purchasers; and *émigrés* must not return to France. There would be a free Press, though such freedom could be suspended legally; no more domiciliary visits, no armed assemblies, no Clubs, no political Societies gathering in public; and the provincial Communes made way for Departmental Directories.

A final measure, to prevent anti-republican majorities, determined that two-thirds of the new legislature should be taken from the present Convention, and troublesome Montagnards were not eligible, though the Electoral Assemblies would be permitted to select the deputies. The Constituent Assembly had abolished itself: the Convention perpetuated itself. Accordingly, royalists and many of the moderates were in revolt; yet the scheme was accepted by a middle-class majority when put to the country. Deputations came to the bar, protesting against the two-thirds clause. The Convention snubbed them, proclaiming the new Constitution; and they fixed a day in October for the start of the elections.

The royalists in Paris took advantage of the vexation against the two-thirds clause, tried to rouse the Sections, and with the conservatives, and the disaffected who were angry enough to fight, they had over twenty thousand of a rabble. The available Convention troops, about six thousand, had support from Jacobins ready to join in a momentary pact to rout a common foe. Menou, in command, sympathised with the opposing movement and wanted to negotiate. The Convention arrested him, and gave the work to Barras of Thermidor

fame. Bonaparte chanced to be at Paris, idle, under rebuke. Barras had enough foresight to make use of him during that insurrection of Vendémiaire. The insurgents had no cannon. Bonaparte knew that cannon would decide the affair. He advised his masters, made his plans. A young officer, Murat, of later fame, was sent at midnight to secure the artillery of the National Guard parked at the Camp des Sablons. In the morning, cannon had been placed and the approaches to the Tuileries, the streets and bridges thereabouts, could be swept by grape-shot. The insurgents advanced in the afternoon. Bonaparte directed the artillery. Before ten o'clock at night the Convention had thoroughly quashed rebellion. Two ring-leaders were executed; Menou was acquitted after trial. Bonaparte became second in command of the army of the Interior, commander-in-chief when Barras retired.

The Convention, hurrying to an end, passed various educational, legal, economic measures; responsible in the course of its arduous, daring life for the success of French armies, the reconstruction of elementary education, the creation of national archives, museums, the Louvre; for a unity of weights and measures, aerial-telegraphs, the consolidation of the public debt, the administration and sale of national property; for financial, economic, social reforms, divorce, bastardy and heritage laws, and a development of civil laws founded by the first Assembly and accomplished under Napoleon; and it had lost popularity, and virtue, after Thermidor, incoherent personal interests having violated public interests and half-strangled democracy. An amnesty freed all political offenders since 1791, except the prisoners of Vendémiaire, and so let Carrier's men loose again.

The Convention was dissolved at the end of October, the new government, the Directory, taking office on November 3, in the seventh year of the Revolution, the fourth year of the Republic.



SIEYÈS



CHAPTER III  
SIEYÈS; AND THE DIRECTORY

I

WHEN the Convention elected a committee to draft a Constitution in 1795, the first man chosen was Sieyès. He excused himself, soon withdrew. He was named the most eminent political architect and thinker of his time, a father of the Revolution; yet month by month and year by year he had evaded prominence, unable to be prominent exactly in his own subtle fashion, awaiting his moment, vigilant, not idle: the mole of the Revolution, Robespierre said. He had delivered France to the Third Estate in 1789. He delivered the Revolution to Bonaparte in 1799. Asked what he had done meanwhile, he said: "*J'ai vécu*," he had survived; brief, oracular, and astonished, if ever he had known astonishment, to find himself safe from the guillotine, prison, exile. Three Constitutions had preceded that of 1795, and had failed; because, Sieyès imagined, none of those Constitutions had been precisely his; and he supposed that number Four would also fail, and for the same reason. And finally his Constitution of 1799 would fail, wrenched out of Sieyès-shape and remodelled by a man of action and war who dealt with facts, avoiding incommodious and embarrassing political fictions. Bonaparte thought the science of politics had relation to the immediate present and should take example from the past: Sieyès thought politics was not the science of that which is, but rather of that which ought to be; and he despised history. He fancied he had mastery of all the problems of statesmanship and would consummate the Revolution at a proper season; whereas he had to make way for

one who would at length raise the cry, "*Vive l'Empereur!*"

Sieyès longed in his youth to be a soldier; but, like an infant Talleyrand, he was infirm, and victim to the piety of his family, respectable good folk of old Provence; who decided that their son, born in 1748, should be a priest. In his days as a thinker he reviled theology because it aimed to demolish philosophy and science, and to hinder rational development with legends about heaven. His training for the Church made an inveterate agnostic of him and accounted for a subsequent misanthropy; also perhaps for his incorrigible habit of sermonising his fellows, when he chose to speak. His masters at the seminary, disquieted by the grave and concise young man and his taste for new philosophical principles, urbanely yet firmly begged him to complete his studies elsewhere; and off he went, took a theological degree at the Sorbonne; and a shrewd preceptor declared that a bishop might turn Sieyès into an erudite, genteel canon, but no one could fit him for the ministry of the Church.

He resolved to dismiss every sentiment and idea of a superstitious nature from his mind, deep read in secular matters, familiar with the leading French and English writers on social theory and philosophy, enslaved by none, disciple only to himself, censuring Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, more attracted by yet always critical of Locke, Bonnet, Condillac. He had no faith in heaven, much faith in human progress, many theories directed to that laudable end, applicable when man by education became reasonable and moral, ceased to reverence priests and Kings, all foes of enlightenment, and studied *l'art social*. Rousseau's effort to escape civilisation and to revert to natural man seemed childish to Sieyès; who argued that art, or science, the only criterions he would accept, meant an advance from natural, crude origins. He founded his hopes for society on the preservation of liberty

and property for all citizens; on representative government free from usurpations and a foolish credulity. The privileged classes were the usurpers, theologians so many charlatans or clowns, the people of France having been obsessed or oppressed by one and the other; hence no likelihood of a real advance until privilege had been uprooted.

Sieyès became a vicar-general and chancellor of the Chartres diocese, while evolving as a philosopher, abominating all loose thought and hyperbole; and he found rest and entertainment in music, wrote for his own behoof, published nothing till shortly before the meeting of the States General; took no conspicuous share in public affairs, though he went to a Provincial Assembly as a representative of the clergy.

With the announcement of the States General and the invitation from government for schemes of reform, Sieyès, now forty, and mature, began his political career, writing pamphlets: an *Essai sur les privilèges*, and the famous *Qu' est-ce que le Tiers-Etat?* a work as dynamic as anything before or since in the tale of such things. What was the Third Estate? he asked. Everything! What had it been hitherto? Nothing! What would it be? Something! The actual Revolution was launched with that pamphlet. The Third Estate, Sieyès wrote, included all directly productive labourers and nineteen-twentieths of those who were fit to serve the country in any capacity; the nobles were a burden on the nation and could not justly form part of the nation; the clergy were not quite so negligible, having done slight work for the people in the past. The nobles were not even French, descendants of barbarians who came from Germany, subjugating and robbing the Gauls, the Latin Celts; and they continued to subjugate and rob. The true French nation was entitled to abolish privilege and to get compensation from their oppressors. Nobles ought to be expelled, sent to *les forêts de Franconie*.



This challenge, apparently based on historic right, Sieyès having condescended to use history, thrilled the people. He emerged from a meditative obscurity, hailed as a prophet as well as a priest; nor had anyone the temerity to argue that in assigning no virtue whatsoever to the nobles he had scorned them as they scorned the Third Estate; had been extravagant and unjust in his desire to promote justice. He had coined the most potent election cry in political history, becoming a demagogue in spite of himself, persuaded that all methods were fair in such a war. Certainly he meant war; a fact evident when, as the last Third Estate deputy chosen at the belated Paris elections, he sat in the National Assembly, three weeks after the opening at Versailles, and when struggle between the three Orders took shape.

## II

Sieyès had schooled himself as a man and a lofty thinker, knew the value of words, having already projected language reforms; and forthwith he showed that he had no gift of co-operating with anyone wholeheartedly. The turbulence of early National Assembly days enforced his calm and practised reserve, although now and again he summarised conflicting ideas by a succinct phrase, announcing an inelastic new formula. When the Third Estate were debating the verification of powers, not yet bold enough to defy nobles and clergy, he said: "*Il faut couper le câble:*" they must cut all cables. He would abolish privilege; and, asked by what means, he said they must find a means, stake out the ground, leaving successors to achieve the task, if they themselves could not make end. The brevity and directness of his words enhanced his prestige among deputies, the public, the Paris crowds; and folk said that at last they had an oracle whose few utterances were more potent than the deeds of most men.

His appearance and solemn deportment added to his mystery and authority: an angular, thin fellow, neither tall nor short, nothing robust about him, his nervous energies as taut as his rigid ideas, his dark hair and his clothes emphasising the pallor of the oval lean face; nose aquiline, long, sharp at the tip, the high forehead sloping and narrow, lips pursed, jaws stubborn, eyes dark like his hair, vivid, cold, the whole aspect of the man acute, peering; nor could he bellow like a Danton; nothing of the bludgeon about Sieyès, much of the steel-blue rapier. The deference and respect paid to him at first may have spoiled him for the future, enticing him to expect the rights of a hierophant; and later opposition, criticism, disregard, affronted him and drove him into himself. He believed his wisdom and assurance entitled him to leadership among men so palpably in need of a leader; but nature had not equipped him squarely for the part, and, since he could not blame himself, he blamed his fellows, resenting their folly and confusion. He had his way in the matter of feudal privilege and helped to the doom of that grey old iniquity; he was responsible for the abolition of the ancient Provinces, the inauguration of Departments; he did not command in the affair of Church property, advocating discretion and not violence; and he said that men wanted to be free and knew not how to be just. He proposed the formation of the National Guard; read his *Préliminaires de la Constitution* to the *Comité de Constitution*, distinguishing between natural and civil rights, passive and active: all men ought to enjoy the advantages of society, though only those who contributed to the public establishment could be shareholders of the great social enterprise, veritable members of the association. Thus active and passive citizens, and much conflict in the near future.

Disorder vexed him, anarchy offended him; and when disorder led to anarchy he withdrew yet more

closely and sombrely into himself, losing faith in Assemblies, oppressed by the stupidity and turpitude of man, while holding firmly to his revolutionary creed, sure that men were not sufficiently educated to follow reason and to develop Social Science, would not and at the moment could not fathom him, and so neglected him. He watched events, ready to abstain from interference until he could have his own way, unwilling or unable to compromise. Mirabeau called Sieyès Master, and, in the Assembly, deplored the silence and inaction of the Third Estate champion, the man who had revealed the genuine principles of representative government to the world. Mirabeau named that silence a public calamity; slyly and ironically, no doubt. Sieyès would not allow himself to be allured in this kind, steeped in the caustic pride of a philosopher herded, he thought, among numerous asses and a few hyenas. He sat still and mute, very dignified.

Presently deputies recalled the initial work of Sieyès and he had his fortnight as President of the Assembly; was President of the Jacobin Club, assenting unready and with some marked ill-humour; and he had place on the Directory of the Paris Department. At Mirabeau's death, men who admired Sieyès' probity urged him to negotiate with the Court and help in the revision of the Constitution. He had measured the character of Louis, and agreed to act only if and when the King would put himself at the head of the Revolution, he too wanting a citizen-King, or no King; for he contemned hereditary sovereigns, ridiculing divine rights as he would have ridiculed the infallibility of a Pope. If a constitutional monarch could serve to buttress liberty, then Sieyès would be loyal, freedom to him being the reason of government, allowing men control of their faculties for development, and liberty in action, if they did not encroach on the liberty of fellow-citizens. All his imaginary and mathematical Constitutions were framed to secure and to conserve such

liberty, and they bristled with safeguards against the evils of democracy in the need to establish the virtues of democracy; for Sieyès, like Francis Bacon, wanted to endow human life with new inventions and riches, to increase man's happiness and to mitigate his sufferings. There could be no hope for Sieyès in a Louis as constitutional-monarch; and the flight to Varennes made end to whatever fancies he may have had. He detested the Court now, as he detested the Sansculottes; who, he thought, might destroy Court and government and liberty in the mania for an equality never specifically defined, always impracticable. Men like Marat seemed mad cannibals to him; nor did Marat approve of Sieyès. *Ne pardons de vue l'abbé Sieyès*”; watch the fellow, Marat said, keeping a wary eye on the Third Estate philosopher, the Fourth Estate enemy.

Sieyès had no important share in the final debates on Constitution number One, having issued his *Déclaration volontaire aux patriots*, in collaboration with Condorcet, as he was to collaborate in Condorcet's *Journal d'instruction sociale*, admonishing those who sneered at philosophical and social principles suitable to a rational community; and he retired to his villa during the months of the Legislative Assembly, gave advice to the Girondins when they chose to consult him, probably shrugged and frowned when they would not take his word; and he saw them struggle and sink. He was elected to the National Convention by three Departments, his reputation as a creator of '89 having outweighed his later and wilful inaction. He sat with the Plain, silent again, in a moody disdain, then by caution, timidity. He voted for Louis' death, and effaced himself promptly. He had his place on committees, and did little; joined the *Comité de Constitution*, and soon left it, unable to impose his own Constitution in its entirety; and when the Montagnards sought advice, framing their Constitution, he listened gravely, then left them, uttering no word.

He proposed an elaborate and involved scheme for public instruction, saw it mangled by Robespierre; and no doubt shrugged anew, certainly retired once more. He kept from sight as much as he dare through the Terror, awaiting the ever more distant victory of reason over fanaticism, unheroic in his quiet, aware of Robespierre's enmity, afraid for his life. "*Taisons nous*," he wrote in his private journal about this time: Let us be silent. There was a tale of his having been saved from proscription at the Jacobins by a cobbler who vouched for Sieyès' innocence as one living among books and heedless to politics: the cobbler mended his boots, and so he knew, and said so. Sieyès had no prominent share in the events after Thermidor, yet awaiting his hour; so until he published his *Notice sur la vie de Sieyès*, his apologia, in which he reproved the Left and Right, aristocrats and terrorists, denouncing the crimes of Robespierre; and he blamed creatures who were too stupid to understand his desire for national prosperity and social perfection.

Now he deigned to join the Thermidorian *Comité de Salut public*, more or less in agreement with their foreign-policy, war-work and negotiations; this whilst deputies were carping and quarrelling, whilst patriots who had served on Tribunals, revolutionary Committees, or had belonged to the popular Societies, were being imprisoned in the Departments, and France yearned for peace. But peace should be made only at the heavy expense of wolfish French enemies: so thought the Committee. The Republic had extended its boundaries to the Rhine, and meant to dictate to Europe. Natural frontiers, war to the death on England, a European coalition against England; such was the policy, and so it remained for years, England in the opinion of Sieyès and his colleagues being the hereditary foe to all the nations of Europe. Carnot, like a Danton, realised that such a policy would call for enormous French armies, ruining any prospect of liberty, making

a despotism of France in the multiplication of wars; yet Carnot too allowed himself to be hypnotised by those natural frontiers. Sieyès occupied himself with schemes to allure Prussia, win her alliance and to excite her against Austria; and after the treaty of Basel he went to Holland and negotiated and concluded a treaty with the Dutch, shouldering the weight of that painful, difficult task. Other treaties followed. Meanwhile he had helped to reinstate the surviving Girondins, had carried measures against Jacobins and royalists; and during the insurrection of Vendémiaire he told Bonaparte to take council with his own genius, Committees in his opinion now being useless for the direction of troops and the management of guns; and doubtless he remembered that advice years after, ruefully.

He had left the Committee appointed to frame Constitution number Four, yet again unable to have his own way; and when reproached by one of the members, he said they were incapable of understanding him. He addressed the Convention on the faults and weakness of the actual Constitution, sermonised those responsible for such elementary work, dealt at length and in his usual recondite style with political philosophy, troubling deputies, bewitching others, tiring most of them; but they applauded him when he had done, and rejected his proposals and amendments. He kept from the Convention and meditated in quiet on the flaws of the Constitution, exercising himself in a sour patience, he too *saoul des hommes*. He had not lost his reputation among electors, nineteen Departments having chosen the unreverend Sieyès for the next parliament; and he sat with the *Cinq-Cents*. Names were submitted from which the five Directors could be drawn; men who had voted for Louis' death; and Sieyès came fourth, bracketed with Barras. He declined to serve, astonishing most folk, made room for Carnot, refused to be Minister

for Foreign Affairs; always silent or critical, rarely creative, excusing himself now on the ground that from the start of the Revolution he had been exposed to the attacks of all parties, and though he might be useful enough for light work, he would make a bad coach-horse.

He thought the new Constitution must fail, and stood aside, tasting his quiet asperities, enjoying his aloofness, until power should be given to him to repair the damage and to save France in his own unhampered, studious way; and he believed it was good to die for truth, but not for every truth.

### III

The newly elected third were moderates, with a few royalists and Catholics more or less disguised; all Constitutionals, and they had support from the Right of the selected two-third Conventionalists and made a popular minority, looking to the future to prune the legislature of old and discredited deputies, since periodically one-third of the Councils, determined by ballot, must retire, eligible for re-election, though no member could remain for more than six years in succession. Elections were coercions and intrigues, the Conventionalists in their anxiety to retain power and to shield themselves from reprisals having few constitutional or other scruples; nevertheless all men in authority had taken oath to hate royalty and anarchy and to be faithful to the Republic and the Constitution. The Constitutionals wanted to end the war and to establish a general policy of moderation at home and abroad. The Conventionalists wanted to continue the war and to maintain the revolutionary system of government, afraid that peace and a real widespread civil liberty would give scope and encouragement to the monarchists; and they accused their

critics and adversaries of being royalists or anarchists, using one or the other term of obliquity at will to get aid for themselves at this and that hour of crisis, having the majority, but never their easeful way, nor assurance for the future.

Of the five Directors, Carnot longed for a genuine freedom in France, weary of revolutionary methods, and sympathised with the Constitutionals, allied to them in spirit, wholly so later. Letourneur, an honest and genial mediocrity, liked Carnot and with him formed a minority in the Directorate against Barras, the old soldier and roué, dissolute, adroit and venal; Rewbell, an old Jacobin, skilful, rich in resource, cynical, now and again brutal, intimate with speculators, war-profiteers, men accused of every kind of fraud, protecting them though he may not have shared illicit gains; and La Révellière-Lépeaux, an old Girondin trained to the law, sharp in temper, proud of his democratic record, who occasionally spoke for Carnot and his friend, more often for Barras and Rewbell. La Révellière-Lépeaux, displeased because Catholic churches had been reopened some months after Thermidor and *décades* were neglected, hoped to trounce priests and their faith, revivifying the cult of reason.

The squabbles among deputies were repeated and intensified among the Directors, and government was divided against itself. Sieyès disliked Rewbell, and despised Barras and La Révellière-Lépeaux, yet haughtily censorious of most things and men; though he voted with the Conventionals, he too afraid of monarchists and conservative reaction. He seldom addressed the Council, and continued to isolate himself. His experience on the finance Commission added to his disquiet and grief as he fancied he could see imminent and national bankruptcy, in spite of conquest wars and spoliation; and he frequented exclusive *salons* and presumably foretold the collapse of the



Directory, waiting to be called when Rewbell and his crew had gone to political limbo.

The Directors dominated the Councils, except in finance, and used ministers as so many clerks to themselves, like a *Comité de Salut public*. They controlled the majority of civil and military appointments, could sign treaties, propose wars, though not able to make or repeal laws, having to flatter, cajole or intimidate the legislature. They had their own guard, handsome rooms at the Luxembourg, equipages, and about £5000 a year severally; and they wore ornate costumes, bespangled and befeathered, reviving fopperies when on show. Also they had the chance to make fortunes by corruption, and only Carnot and Letourneur escaped blame in these matters; nor were ministers absolved from cheateries. Talleyrand had returned to France with his sly limp and discreet smile, in office now; and Talleyrand, said report, took bribes from foreign powers during his years at the ministry. The conflict in policy and the laxity in administration, the follies and extravagance of the new rich, the peculations and rogueries of financiers and gamblers, spread misery in France: food-supplies and fuel were scarce and rationed, hungry poor folk scraped in gutters for refuse; and brigands infested the highways. Men enquired of each other what profit could ensue from having abolished Kings, nobles, aristocrats, when deputies, functionaries, contractors and merchants, a new parasitic enemy, replaced the old; and they consoled themselves only by the fact of army triumphs, peace-treaties, a hope of further treaties, and the belief that *émigrés* and royalists were at last powerless to recover ground or to take revenge.

The Fourth Estate was articulate again, and active. Babeuf, the anæmic shadow of Marat and editor of the *Tribun du Peuple*, gathered men at his illegal Club, offering a refuge to old terrorists and Sansculottes; and he formed his *Société des Egaux*. He was a

visionary democrat who admired Robespierre at this stage in a hazardous journalistic career, and argued that when the minority of a State monopolised all the wealth and oppressed the majority, the administration ought to intervene, stifling abuses, so that everyone would have enough and no one too much. The Revolution, he thought, had lost its intrinsic character after Thermidor, and there must be another revolution, a collectivist State, an end to private ownership, death to the Directors, a people's judgment against the Councils; and liberty, equality and happiness would follow. Conspiracy took shape when the executive shut Babeuf's Club. Attempts were made by the rebels and their recruited forces to influence the Paris divisional troops, and failed, plans having been disclosed to Carnot. There were arrests, *Commissions militaires*, a few shootings, imprisonments, deportations; and Babeuf was sentenced to death.

A second conspiracy, royalist now and encouraged by the repression of the first, had the Abbé Brottier for leader; a royalist agent and spy in Paris, who expected to proclaim Louis XVIII. That conspiracy also failed, one and the other having damaged the sparse credit of the government. Soon after, elections took place, former members of the Convention, chosen by ballot, having to retire; and most of them stood for re-election. They accused opposing candidates of royalism, and anarchy, or both; and only a handful were returned. The country had tired of Convention-alists and began to loathe the Directory.

Sieyès drew public attention about this time. An ex-priest broke into his house, shot at him, wounded him slightly in hand and side, and fled. Sieyès, unhurried and calm, able to confront experience of this sort like a philosopher, said casually, and with a touch of humour rare in the man, that if the would-be assassin came again, let him be told that he, Sieyès, had gone out. The Directory used the incident, and

had a startling tale of royalist plots, trying to gain help; and assuredly and always there were royalist plots in and out of France, not formidable at this pass, though a latent danger; and the Directory did in fact need help, for the elections had robbed them of their majority in the Councils and they had to face a legislature hostile to them; nor were any legal means available by which they could safeguard themselves. The new representatives elected Barthélemy to succeed the retiring Director Letourneur. Barthélemy, an old-school brilliant diplomatist, shrewd, benign in his liberalism, and courageous, stood for the Constitution, pacific legislation; and at once he took sides with Carnot against Barras, Rewbell and La Révellière-Lépeaux, the latest of ambitious *triumvirates*.

The new men of the Councils tempered severe laws against *émigré* relatives in France, decreed a measure of freedom for priests and Catholicism: laws ascribed to royalist conspiracy by the Conventionists, repealed in turn after the *coup d'état* in the following September, 18 Fructidor, 1797, and with Sieyès' approval, he too being alarmed at any suspicion of royalist conspiracy, though the trickery of Fructidor, mortally wounding counter-revolution, infringed most of his liberal and rationalistic theories; yet he had the utmost contempt for the Directory, and looked to a revision of the Constitution, dreamed of a State figure-head who could impose what he, Sieyès, designed politically. He may have seen in Fructidor a rehearsal for Brumaire and the arrival of Bonaparte. In the meantime, any suggestion that the Revolution was in peril served momentarily to divert the mass of French people from a bitter and vocal sense of their misery and to unite them in defence of that Revolution against *émigrés*, the Princes, and agents strewn over the land and unceasingly at subterranean work, promoting riots, exciting the fanatics of Right and Left, using any means to make revolutionary government impossible.

The *triumvirate* of the Directors could not save themselves legally. Effort at compromise failed, underhand practices multiplied. Carnot and Barthélemy were in opposition to their fellow-Directors. Barras sent for Hoche and his troops, told the young general of an immediate royalist insurrection, urged him to protect the Republic. Hoche, at the Luxembourg, was cross-examined by the watchful Carnot, and realised that all might not be well for democracy in the part assigned to him by Carnot's opponents. Hoche withdrew, touched with a noble anger; a man honest, brave, sorely bewildered, and with death in him or about him; for he died mysteriously less than three weeks after. Probably Hoche, a staunch republican, as most of the army, believed, like Danton, that civil, religious and industrial liberty could be assured only if propaganda-war and conquest made way for strictly defensive warfare and France took her rightful, un-belligerent place in the comity of European nations; and he alone might have resisted Bonaparte and saved France, and Europe, from the Napoleonic wars.

Now the *triumvirate* turned for aid to Bonaparte, who had evoked admiration and fear by his Italian campaign. He had not yet matured his plans, and hesitated, wondering if power would fall to the Constitutionalists or to the Conventionalists. He decided against the moderates, spoke to the Italian army, using the scare of royalist conspiracy; and, not yet ready himself to risk too much, he sent his general, the swashbuckling, uproarious Augereau, to Paris, warning the *triumvirate* that the man was an excellent soldier, but something of a madcap.

On the night of September 3, the *triumvirate* issued a proclamation. The Directory, they said, had been attacked by a host of *émigrés*, assassins and brigands from the Vendée. Augereau, with his forces, broke the law against the advance of troops within a stated distance of the Councils, and besieged the Tuileries.

Barthélemy was arrested. Carnot had warning, made his escape through the Luxembourg gardens, and set off for Switzerland. The next day, deputies under arrest asked Augereau's men by what law they had acted, and were told, by law of the sword. The submissive Councillors took orders, met presently, the *Anciens* in the École de Santé, the remnants of the *Cinq-Cents* in the Odéon theatre, alike surrounded by troops and a noisy mob. They proscribed their deputy-brethren, under compulsion, appointed a Commission, including Sieyès, and sat awaiting further instruction. Sieyès wished to give a constitutional turn to the new decrees, and could not. The machinery of proscription was largely due to him, for he believed that no one would be guillotined or shot, the *triumvirate* having agreed that men whose prejudice and claims, whose very existence, menaced republican government, should be exiled. The election of a hundred and fifty-four representatives was declared null, also the new administrative and judicial appointments in the forty-nine Departments concerned. Barthélemy, Carnot, members of the Councils, and others under suspicion, were to be transported, without trial or any opportunity for defence. Newspapers were suppressed, proprietors and editors exiled. All the laws recently enacted, favourable to the relatives of *émigrés* and the priests, were repealed. All whose names filled suspect-lists must leave France at once, or they might be shot. Priests were to be transported almost at will and whim, others who escaped proscription being forced to take the oath of hatred of royalty and love of the Constitution.

Merlin de Douai, a skilled diplomatist and a dauntless politician, stored with the guile of old and new France and deeply read in law, history, economy, in most things; and François de Neufchâteau, a rhetorical lawyer with a taste for literature and the drama, succeeded Carnot and Barthélemy. The *triumvirate*

had gained the day and could terrorise their opponents. Sieyès no doubt salved his conscience and placated his mind for a share in this minor holocaust with the eternal and insidious formula of Political Necessity; for by laws of Fructidor, and in course of time, men were condemned by *Commissions militaires*, suspects and prisoners went in batches to Cayenne and elsewhere. Resistance to such laws provoked further impositions, peevish tyrannies, a revival of *lettres de cachet*, and added to the national hatred of the Directory, easing the way for the new despot who had been content on this occasion to send his general and would appear himself at his own good time.

## IV

The prowess of the several French armies, the immense booty extracted from vassal States, and the peace terms imposed on defeated enemies, had been a source of strength to the Directory; and Bonaparte's treaty at Campo Formio, in the autumn of 1797, distasteful to Sieyès by reason of shameless bargain with Austria, fired an illusory hope in war-weary France that at last there would be a general and a lasting peace. The Directorate continued to fear peace, as if it were another royalist conspiracy; for they would have armies to supply, could not pay expected gratuities, nor did anyone know what ambitious political soldiers might do with a blundering executive and flaccid civilians when they came home, nor how masses of young men trained to camp-life and the excitements of conquest would behave when told to return to civil drudgeries in a famished country. Only new wars could pay for old wars. French politicians, having created a war-machine, now suffered the tyranny of machines, led when they meant to lead; and they would be yet led until the final and reverber-

ating crash of that machine at Waterloo. Consequently the Directorate, as blind to the facts at home as to the temper of peoples abroad, sent armies to revolutionise the Swiss confederation, and again to Italy; were persuaded to allow Bonaparte to set out for Egypt; and by their foreign policy, and arrogance in negotiation, they lost all chance of peace with England, and gave Austria the opportunity she would have taken at her own time of reopening war. France at length had to outstare England, Austria, Russia, Turkey, Portugal, Naples; to pant and wallow in a new, desperate situation when French armies were beaten and only Bonaparte could snatch victories in Egypt, though blockaded by the British fleet. Financial subterfuge and chicanery soon after Fructidor, and torrents of false *assignats* manufactured by enemies, had ruined French credit, demoralising finance, industry, commerce, and affairs grew worse month by month. A second *coup d'état* nullified further elections, attracting slight notice among languid and disheartened citizens, and did not greatly help the Directorate; for now their own followers began to undermine government, wrangles ensuing over questions of finance and supply.

Sieyès went on embassy to Berlin, to negotiate a durable alliance with Prussia, if he could; and for the time being he was as thankful to be away from mal-administration, quarrels and cabals as the Directors to see him go. Talleyrand sent word to Berlin that the new ambassador had been in the forefront of the Revolution at its start, and had tired of modern republicans, wishing to leave a country devoid of charm for him. Actually, Sieyès, like Bonaparte, meant to return to France at the appropriate hour. He had told a Prussian minister that Prussians would not find an ordinary politician in him; but, rather, one who loved moral and social order, did not countenance all the projects of the Directory, and would oppose them at his own time. Berlin found an extraordinary

politician in him. He was pedantic, inflexible, even insolent at Court, with his notions of republican virtue, contemptuous of Prussian diplomats and courtiers; nor was he hopeful. France wanted a European peace, he wrote to Talleyrand, and Prussia, even if well-disposed, could not give such a peace; whereas Austria might, though ill-disposed. Prussia knew that a general peace would be possible only when France renounced her conquests on the left bank of the Rhine. Sieyès intended to nourish the enmity between Austria and Prussia, suspicious of Prussians after the Basel treaty, though he ignored the seeds of conflict inherent in that treaty, always pursuing the scheme of natural, not ancient, frontiers, and with the Rhine as barrier, Germany as a new federation guaranteed by the Republic and holding the balance between Austria and Prussia; an intermediary State and, with Holland and Piedmont, sheltering France from invasion. Russia would object, England would never consent; but Sieyès cared little for Russia, and like Bonaparte he dreamed of constraining and humiliating England. Sieyès' theory of sovereign peoples concerned France alone; other peoples must forgo their traditions and national interests on behalf of France. Those who accused him of being Austria's friend, he said, were liars, also those who named him the friend of Prussia; for he was nothing but a Frenchman: "*Je ne suis que Français.*" He idled at Berlin, watching events narrowly, waiting; and Prussia remained neutral for her own reasons, not because of his diplomacy.

He went home in the early autumn of 1799, after a year's absence, and about the time when the masterful Russian Suvóroff reached Turin and a new invasion of France appeared not unlikely; when sullen French troops blamed the home-government for defeats and were occasionally in the mood to trudge to Paris and storm the Luxembourg and the Tuileries. Rewbell, the most able of the Directorate, retired by ballot, and



Sieyès consented to take his place as member of a Directory in death throes. He would be in at the death. Months earlier, conscript laws had called for recruits, enrolling only a fraction of the numbers specified. Frenchmen who prayed for peace and abominated the Directory had avoided service by all possible means, including self-mutilation, resisting authority; and many turned to brigandage, to rebellion. War with Russia and Austria had led to defeats on the Rhine, full retreat in Italy; finance measures extended chaos; and the last elections, reflecting the temper of the country, had gone heavily against the government, crowding the Councils with vigorous Jacobins, and men of Fructidor now hostile to their old leaders. A foreign diplomatist wrote that few Kings taking a throne in times of difficulty had caused such a profound sensation as the entry of citizen Sieyès to the Directory, all glances being fixed on him. If Sieyès failed now, only a military dictatorship could restore France; and thoughtful men, sadly or wrathfully aware of that grim fact, strained to see what the political philosopher would or could do.

His fellow-directors were as apprehensive and expectant as the rest, and alarmed for themselves. He wrote of them in his journal that they paid court to him, but he detested their society, for they did not believe in moral goodness. He wanted to insult them, to tell them they were vile and wretched men who fancied he must resemble them; he would end by hating them. And hate them he did, and soon, though he needed help in his design and had to compromise with Barras; who, hearing of Sieyès' appointment, grinned, saying he would always pretend to agree with the fellow, hence Sieyès must assume that Barras had almost as much wisdom as he, and they would square handsomely together. Sieyès joined with the moderates in the Councils, and began operations by cleansing the Directorate; chasing three of them from

the Temple, he said, following the example of the Lord, because they had bought and sold, dishonouring the Republic. Gohier, a republican distinguished only by his honesty; Moulins, a soldier fitful in his moods, and stubborn; and Roger Ducos, an opportunist, morally elastic and not remarkably intelligent, formed the new Directorate with Sieyès and Barras. There was struggle between moderates and Jacobins, struggle at the Luxembourg, where Moulins and Gohier stood for the old republicanism against Sieyès and his obedient Ducos, and the sly Barras, who awaited results, prepared to acclaim the victor.

Sieyès presumed that he would become the political master of France; and once again he miscarried. The Jacobins of the *Cinq-Cents* gained strength with the news of army defeats and wished to transform their Council into a Convention, reverting to the Country-in-danger methods of 1793; and they had a Committee of Eleven, failed to secure the full power of a *Comité de Salut public*, though successful in part for a while, hampering Sieyès and his friends among the *Anciens*. They passed a law of Hostages, revived the *levée en masse*, and domiciliary visits. This law of Hostages, to prevent what Jacobins called royalist brigandage rife now that troops were being hurried to the frontiers and royalists and others had more opportunity to create trouble, gave local authorities in the disaffected areas the right to imprison the relatives of *émigrés*, aristocrats, brigands, to deport four such hostages for every murdered republican; to confiscate their property, imposing collective fines on the rest; and a hostage who tried to escape would be shot.

The measure led to reprisals, inevitably, fostered anarchy and sowed the germs of another civil war; and a second law, a progressive income-tax squeezing the middle-classes, crippled what was left of industry after nearly four years under the Directory. Jacobins, emboldened by the menace of invasion, reconstituted

the old Clubs, appealed to the Sansculottes; and a considerable number of the *Cinq-Cents* allied themselves to the new revolutionary movement, gaining the sympathy of Gohier and Moulins, the help of the war-minister and the generals Augereau and Jourdan. Sieyès rallied his moderates, and had the goodwill of citizens who were not too apathetic or disillusioned to give attention to other than their immediate, personal dangers, and whose nerves had been shaken by the rebirth of Jacobinism and talk of agrarian laws. Sieyès decided that the social art and philosophic politics were at the moment ineffectual without brute force, and he searched for means, turning to the army, aware that sober middle-class citizens who had anything to lose and did not believe the Revolution itself might be gravely threatened would yet support him.

Two factors were essential, he said to Fouché, now a moderate, waiting and watching, like Barras and the opportunists: two factors, a head and an arm; a philosopher and a soldier. Bonaparte toiled in Egypt, out of reach, and he might be more of a problem than an asset if he came home; therefore Sieyès chose Joubert, after countermanding a message to Egypt. Joubert entered warmly into the spirit of the design; went off to Italy where, if he could beat Suvóroff, he would win prestige enough to return to Paris and, in the name of the executive, crush Jacobins, all opposition. Joubert did not beat Suvóroff, and supplementary Austrians, at Novi; a French disaster; and he died fighting. Sieyès, in the meantime, having his soldier, his arm, his sword, as he thought, took prompt measures, assisted by the subtle repressive genius of Fouché, Minister of Police. The Jacobin Club was forcibly closed, the military command of Paris transferred, and more journalists were deported. Resistance continued among the *Cinq-Cents*, the hope of Jacobins now centring in further army defeats, confusion at home; but the Anglo-Russian army was beaten in

Holland, Russians were routed at Zurich, Suvóroff failed to cross the Alps from Italy to Switzerland and had to retreat in disorder; and Bonaparte won the battle of Aboukir, slaughtering Turks. Jacobins and Country-in-danger methods were now worthless, and France, saved anew from invasion and the accessory terror, rang with the name of Bonaparte. "*C'est Bonaparte qui nous manque*," had been written in the Paris journals.

The American Morris had said in 1793 that France would soon be governed by a despot, a republican general; others had already predicted that either the King would have an army, or the army a King; Empress Catherine had foreseen the arrival of some great man who would take possession of France; Burke had said that French liberty would fall a victim to the first great general who drew the glances of all men.

That general was on his way home.

Before the news of the victories, Sieyès and his friends, doubting the result of their war on Jacobins, had agreed to recall Bonaparte, giving him full authority at so desperate a pinch. Bonaparte had chosen his hour to go back to France, and this before the official message of recall found him. He took shipping at Alexandria, escaped the British fleet, miraculously, and landed at Fréjus. Sieyès was in talk with soldier Moreau, Joubert's successor, no doubt sounding him too, when the news reached them. Here, Moreau said, was the man to make a *coup d'état* far better than he, Moreau. Sieyès also had been comforted by the recent tale of French victories, fancying that now he might progress without a Bonaparte; and he spoke of insubordination, of military insolence, and did not share the joy that convulsed France as Bonaparte travelled processionally and in triumph from Provence to Paris.

At the revolution of November, 1799, Brumaire, the soldier eclipsed the philosopher; the realist overreached the ideologue. Year after year Sieyès had awaited the opportunity to take a lead and palm himself and his elaborately reasoned schemes on men taught by experience to forgo their follies and bombast and to submit to his decretal judgments; again and again he had partly emerged before retiring once more to ponder and brood and solace his vanities and deepen his misanthropy, having found the temperature unfavourable. And then he ventured to offer himself as a creator; to learn that the hour had sounded for one more forceful and dexterous than he; and so perished almost the last of his political illusions. When Bonaparte had mastered the situation, after fear, doubt and inglorious wavering, with Sieyès in a backwater, holding the wheel, so he thought, to steer the new ship to a harbour—all that was left of the legislature adjourned itself, abolished itself, naming Bonaparte, Sieyès and Ducos provisional Consuls of an intermediary Commission drawn from the *Anciens*, and a remnant of the *Cinq-Cents*, the majority having fled.

Bonaparte flattered and beguiled Sieyès, duping him. They had no government, he said, because they had no effective Constitution; and the genius of Sieyès entitled him to frame the new Constitution. The three Consuls met. Sieyès did not at once realise that he and Ducos were lay-figures; a fact so much bitter hemlock to him in the sequel. Sieyès, unable to take second place graciously, began to sulk anew; and when asked by an emissary to produce his Constitution, and with haste and decision, he said he had some ideas in his head, but nothing was written; nor had he the patience or the time to put such ideas into shape. This seemed unhelpful to the astonished emissary. He persuaded Sieyès to dictate to him;

and so an abstruse and lengthy, bewildering piece of social philosophy and political algebra, Sieyès' last Constitution. No more Sovereignty of the People for him in his mistrust of Jacobins and demagogues, in his assumption that citizens were not politically educated; no more direct share in affairs for them, though he had fictions with which to soothe them; and he would deliver the State to a dominant class, and then, by a system of wheels within wheels, reduce the machinery of power in the complicated effort to save the country from a usurpation of power. He had a Constitutional Jury, appointed for life, able to choose their own successors, to nominate a Grand Elector, and deputies for the two Chambers; to set aside unconstitutional laws, and, if necessary to remove the Grand Elector; who would do nothing but figure as an ornament, a symbol of national unity and splendour.

Bonaparte laughed at the Grand Elector. How, he asked, could Sieyès think that a man with some talent and honour would be satisfied with the rôle of a pig fattened on a few millions? Sieyès retorted by enquiring if Bonaparte wanted to be King; and now he could smile at Bonaparte's frown. After agitations, conferences, quibblings and some knavery, perpetuated day and night, Bonaparte had a scheme brief and intentionally obscure to fit his own notions and the realities, not yet inaugurating though moving toward a full dictatorship. The new master had in measure dealt with his colleagues as he dealt with his generals. Sieyès could not play reliable staff-officer to anyone. The Grand Elector was transformed into a First Consul for ten years, with two subordinates of whom Sieyès refused to be one. The First Consul was entitled to promulgate laws, name councillors of State, ministers, ambassadors, most of the judges, prefects and sub-prefects, and select departmental and municipal councils, army and navy officers, and so on, controlling diplomacy, signing treaties. As a last stroke of amiable

irony, Sieyès was asked to choose the two subordinates, and did so, tamed now, anxious to hide himself, allowing himself to take a nominal honour as President of the new Senate.

At the end of the year, Sieyès, by way of national recompense and in recognition of the fact that he had enlightened nations by his writings, as it was said, had the offer of one of the domains at the disposal of the State: a perquisite for him, flung to him with a royal gesture by the conqueror. The cold dignity of Sieyès forsook him and he accepted the offer, and must have suffered grievously in his pride; for the gift designed, Crosne, proved to be unavailable, and he had to be content with a property at Versailles.

He withdrew yet more severely into himself, silent, only oracular on rare occasions. After the fall of Napoleon, who had made a Count, then a Peer, of the Third Estate champion, Sieyès was exiled and took refuge at Brussels. He returned to Paris in 1830, now over eighty, enduring in quiet and neglect, having almost outlived the memory of man; so till his death six years later. He would not write his Memoirs. He said the work of the past was great enough to need no commentary; the acts of the men of the Revolution would teach their thoughts to all who cared to understand; nor could their warnings save others from the like errors, and successors must learn the wisdom of the earlier men only at a price of similar misfortune. So he died, wholly negative, as he said; never having been wholly positive, never plastic, except maybe at the opening of the States General and, for a while, on the Thermidorian *Comité de Salut public*.

In the first days of his disappointment and resentment, he wrote in his journal that a man profound in judgment would not allow himself to be duped twice, though he might be duped once; and for the rest of his life he feared deception, and so encumbered himself, nursing his vexations as dupery followed dupery,

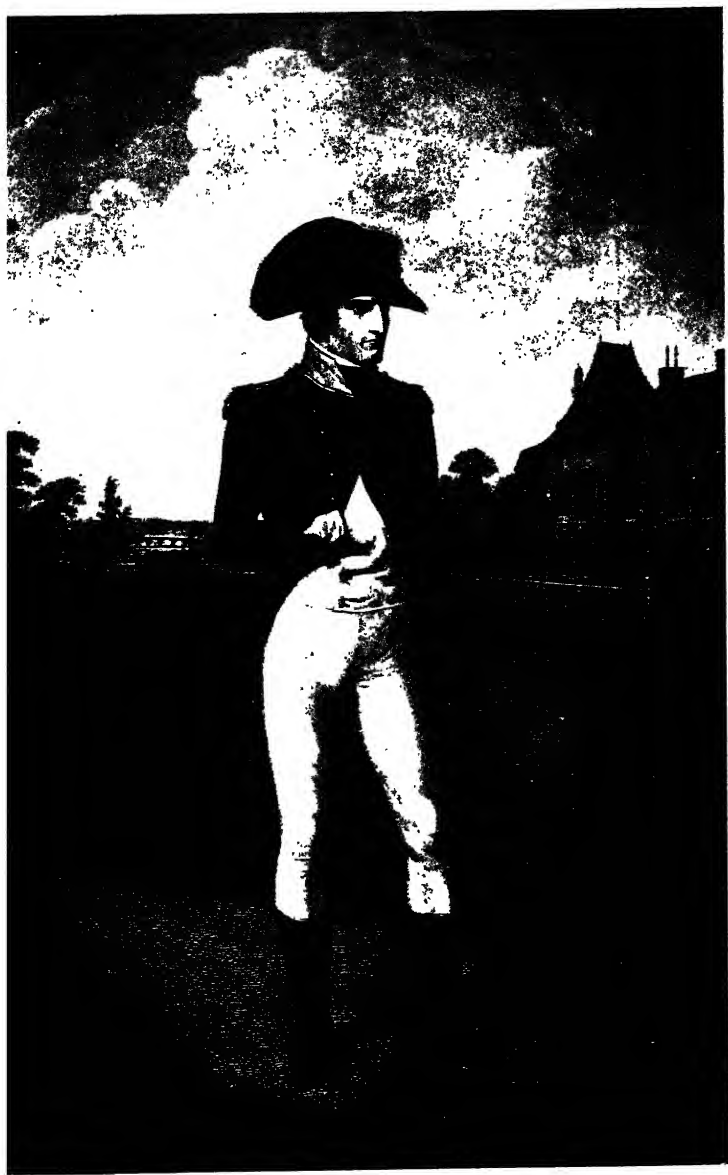
never inspired to give himself generously and bravely to anything or to anyone, becoming torpid: no enthusiasms in Sieyès at any time. Hard, peremptory, artful, stuffed with philosophic pride, unsympathetic acquaintance said of him; and in truth he had the vanity of dogmatic philosophers who claimed the prerogatives of great thinkers and imagined they could not speed because of a widespread and ingrained stupidity among their fellows; and he loved biting phrases and, in his middle-class prejudice, insisted that he alone held to principles of liberty as he opposed Jacobins and royalists alike. Liberty to Sieyès, Michelet wrote, querulously, was passive, inert, egoistic; the liberty to rejoice alone, to do nothing, to dream or sleep, like a monk in a cell or a cat on a cushion.

Napoleon said that Sieyès might have been distressed to find a soldier the hindrance to his philosophical ideas, but, knowing that someone must govern, he preferred Bonaparte to others. Sieyès had to commit political suicide; and there was no resurrection for him. All his life he distrusted instinct, intuition, and worshipped reason, like a Cartesian, blank to the great intuitive forces at work in and through the Revolution. He could not imagine that faults might be in himself, grew sour, began to feed on his own spleen, incurable in his egoism, unbendable in pride, and pitiful in his repressed suffering; and so the oracle became a morose dummy. Condorcet kept his romantic faith in the perfectibility of man to the end, determined that the agony of his body should not ravage his spirit; Sieyès lost his faith when he saw that men would not allow themselves to be disciplined to perfectibility by the new decalogue according to the unsanctified Abbé Sieyès; and toward the end there was more of expediency than of conscience in his political science. He was an autocrat of the study, wandered into a democratic arena, impenetrable, void of social amenities, blinded by the might of his own intellect. He mis-



prised the humorists and poets in his esteem for metaphysicians and political scientists; accordingly he too began to suffer the drowsy unimpassioned grief of philosophers ignored by the world and wilting in the gloom of their own abstractions.

If he had grasped the truth of Bolingbroke's remark that History was philosophy teaching by experience, the history of France might have been different; but he fashioned his own life, wilfully, stubbornly, and had to face a man at the hour of crisis who would urge his son often to read and to reflect on History: that was the only true philosophy. On the other hand, if the dissatisfied were the true benefactors of the world, then Sieyès took high place; and Napoleon lived to regret that he had renounced the aid of the man who had made way for him; and of whom it would be said that in the history of political doctrine, where nearly every chapter had yet to be written, he would be the most valuable who could show what was permanent and progressive in ideas originated by Sieyès.



BONAPARTE  
after Isabey



## CHAPTER IV

### BONAPARTE; AND BRUMAIRE

#### I

BONAPARTE, in one of his outbreaks when the citizen had become an Emperor, said that his enemies tried to smash the Revolution by attacking his person; but he would defend it: he *was* the Revolution. Most words uttered by him to impress or lure or to scare his auditors were touched with hyperbole; for he had the talents of an actor and an artist as well as the genius of a soldier and statesman; the guile of a Machiavelli, the mendacity of a Borgia, the power of a Cæsar. Men said he ratified and consolidated the Revolution, others that he demolished it, appropriating the State, subordinating it to himself. He was a revolution in himself, but not wholly and specifically the French Revolution; a Frenchman neither by ancestry, birth nor character; and he seemed to be a proof that France loved equality under a despot rather than liberty in a true democracy. He hailed from Italy, the cradle of political adventurers; and the paternal stock in him was nourished and melodramatised by the maternal, Corsican blood. Napoleon, as a Frenchman, was a usurper, an anachronism strayed from the fifteenth century, making his own laws and the laws of the land, his will lord of his reason; immoral, unscrupulous, quite worldly, and volcanic in his tempers; a prodigious brigand, and the first administrator of his time, perhaps of all time; splendid in energy and greatness, and paltry; the compendium of the world and, as Goethe told Eckermann, using the world as if it were a piano. He had his upbringing in Corsica among wild folk engaged with personal enmities and

vendettas, heedless of social polity and ordered justice; fain to distrust men, to see life as war, and security and gain only in the reduction of foes by cunning or cheaterly or force.

He was born at Ajaccio in 1769, when France, after the reunion of the previous year, fought to hold Corsica, spewing men on the land, he said, drowning liberty in waves of blood; when Paoli championed his country and, after defeat, went into a temporary exile. Bonaparte contemned his patrician sire for deserting the national cause and bowing to the invader's rule; and he adored his mother, a woman built to breed warriors, primitive in her instincts, untamable, resourceful, brave, and only in a proud bondage to her progeny. Bonaparte learned from her to hate the French before he could speak intelligently; and as he grew from infancy to youth he saw himself as a liberator of his country, a new and victorious Paoli. His father took the pardon offered to Corsican patriots who would obey their masters, and, by the good offices of the French commander, he sent Bonaparte to the military school at Brienne. Here the practical interest and attention of authority fed rather than tempered the gall of the fiery young Corsican against his benefactors. His masters noted his gifts, his extreme egoism. The lad would go far, they thought, if circumstance favoured him; and, years after, he himself said that centuries must pass before the unique combination of events which led to his career would recur in the life of another. He liked to choose a hidden corner where he could dream at his ease; fought if anyone dared to interfere with him. His only friend wrote later of Bonaparte's vow at this time against France: "*Je ferai à tes Français tout le mal que je pourrai!*" he would wreak all possible harm on the French.

With such notions in his brain and blood he went to the *École militaire* at Paris, awaiting Paoli's return and the freedom of Corsica, eager to have great part

in that event, familiar with translations of Plutarch, envisaging himself as a Leonides, a Cincinnatus, the realities of life not yet having conflicted with his juvenile and romantic hopes; and he studied Cæsar and imagined a new conquest of Gaul. The death of his father and the impoverishment of his family added to Bonaparte's misery, and Rousseau sentimentalised his hatreds and enlarged his ambitions: he would write, demonstrating to the world the rights of Corsica, beginning with his pen what he meant to accomplish with a sword. He left Paris and took junior rank in a regiment of artillery at Auxonne, deeply concerned with the aims of his soldiership, and with the financial troubles of his family. He had long furlough on their behalf; a young autocrat among his brothers and sisters, apt to break out angrily at the least opposition, forcing his will, acting and thinking for them, devoted, loyal, and intractable. He wrote an apology for rebellion, a volley against divine laws forbidding revolt: human laws also were ineffective as restraints when violated by a sovereign, since the welfare of the people could be the only proper aim of government. Corsica had freed herself from the yoke of the Genoese; Corsica would free herself from her new oppressors. Always his temperament led him to excess, and only the urge of his will could steady him; and frequently throughout life he suffered from an hysteria not invariably quelled, weeping, raging, sometimes recoiling at unknown danger; and taut, heroically disciplined as a rule when confronting actual danger. Hence his youthful reactions, when dreams of renown evaporated in the glare of reality; for, having read Rousseau, he wrote of the people and freedom, buoyant in his mood, and arrogant; and, having read *Werther*, he wrote of Suicide, benighted, full of despair, hypersensitive, morbid.

After furlough he rejoined his regiment, extended his work and private study, inexhaustible; and he

continued to read Rousseau, an opportunist always; for he took Rousseau's theory of the State and the Social Contract, the Sovereignty of the People, vesting that sovereignty in himself as a beneficent despot who would overturn unpopular despots in the name of the people. He read Montesquieu, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, memorised French dramatists; and he made close studies of history, geography, the physiology and psychology of nations in the effort to understand ancient and modern races, summarising facts and laws and figures, storing his mind for the future in his unmatched passion for work; and he had his maxim, *la carrière ouverte aux talents*, the tools to him who can use them, humming in his brain, if not framed for his tongue as the Revolution drew his attention from the exclusive liberation of Corsica. Paoli's return, his revolt against Jacobins and his alliance with England, completed Bonaparte's disillusionment, helped to make a Jacobin though not a Frenchman of him, gave character to his ambition; and old dreams and hatreds faded and new hopes abounded. In Corsica he began the first of his notable intrigues, on furlough again, seeking election as lieutenant-colonel of the Corsican National Guard, playing his initial *coup d'état*. He abducted a hostile commissioner, imprisoning him in the family house at Ajaccio; involved himself in political and religious quarrels and bloody conflicts, exceeded his furlough, braving the hazard of punishment for desertion and treason.

The declaration of war against the Austrians saved him from disgrace and opened new and enchanting vistas. He was in Paris, an unknown captain, on August 10, 1792, and watched the Tuileries-attack from a shop-window, intensely curious, searching the How and Why of all things, neither warm in allegiance to people nor to Kings, prone to deride one and the other as he speculated on the future, his mind and will

centred wholly in himself, ready if need arose to turn guns on King or people, having more faith in grape-shot than in political theory or abstractions of any sort. After a year of adventures, and disappointments, and when the Girondins were in revolt, he wrote his Jacobin pamphlet, *Le Souper de Beaucaire*, not from conviction so much as from political astuteness; for Girondins were doomed to fail, and Jacobin Committee government had all the promise of success. No political faith in him; only political designs.

He made his first important step at Toulon; and though his genius as an artillery major and his clairvoyance as a strategist were not alone accountable for the capture of a fort commanding the roadstead, and the evacuation of harbour and town by the English and their allies, his labour and daring contributed largely to a potent French success, and to his own advancement. He was general of a brigade, won the invaluable friendship of Auguste Robespierre, then on mission, became commander of the artillery of the Italian army, and dealt in surveys and plans and thought he had escaped from teasing obscurity and must progress quickly, faithful now to the land he would at last control in the name of the people, more directly of himself, unappeasable.

## II

Bonaparte had yet to wait before Vendémiaire swung him above other zealous, bold fellows also in search of preferment. He had work in the meantime, bothered by provincial and meddlesome authorities, and was imprisoned after Thermidor, compromised by his Jacobin acquaintance. The war situation, Carnot's influence, and the need for proven artillery leaders again saved him from punishment, and he left his gaol, a general after delay and much vexation; but



there were further vexations awaiting him. He was ordered to take command of the infantry in the Vendée, could not readily submit to exile from Paris, the red-hot centre of political jobbery, nor make inglorious war on armed peasants; and he loitered week by week, brooding. Life was a flimsy dream soon over, he wrote to his brother; but he found no comfort in philosophic maxims. His brain and body tingled for action, uncurbed by moody abstractions; and he yet idled at Paris, pleading ill-health, suffering from malaria, and the itch, restless, indigent, having to sell his books, his watch; always gnawed by envy of men less unfortunate than he.

News of disasters and retreats in Italy focussed his attention on a revised plan of campaign, and he prepared memoirs, explanatory notes, and sent them to the *Comité de Salut public*. Carnot read those papers, saw that here was strategic genius, wide topographical knowledge, foresight; and when Bonaparte had leapt to favour by his promptitude and skill on that day of Vendémiaire, successful with his grapeshot, Carnot proposed that the young artillery man should take command in Italy. Bonaparte's relations with the acute and dissolute Barras led to his meeting with Joséphine de Beauharnais, now living by her wits, probably an old mistress of Barras; who advised Bonaparte to marry the flighty widow because she belonged socially to the old and the new régime and would strengthen his position, making a Frenchman of him. He meant to be a Frenchman. Among all the insults hurled at him, he said, that of *Corsican* was the most humiliating. So much for his early patriotism. He had an animal love for the lady; married her soon after his appointment to the Italian army.

Bonaparte's plan of campaign had been forwarded to Schérer, his predecessor in Italy. Schérer sent word that the fellow who had drafted such a scheme had better be dispatched to carry it out. Bonaparte

duly arrived for that purpose: a man not yet thirty, about five feet high, with legs too short for his thick body; sickly, yellow, his untidy black hair covering prominent temples; cheeks hollow, eyes grey, peering from deep sockets under straight brows; and his nose was like the beak of a carrion bird, his gestures were quick, imperious, and words came from thin pale lips, like bullets when he shouted. The generals of the Italian army scorned the new chief; who, they thought, had jockeyed himself into position after dispersing a rabble in Paris. They were summoned by him, made to wait. He mentioned his plans briefly, gave his orders, and sent those generals away. Augereau, a heavy gross fighter, stuffed with words and brute courage, had expected to have much to say to this dumpy little Corsican, this friend of Barras, this side-street soldier. Augereau was disquieted at sight of the man, and said nothing. Bonaparte's sudden good fortune had set free the thwarted genius and power of will in him, maturing him rapidly.

The Italian army, ill-clothed, unshod, half-starved, confused, beaten, had been near to dissolution at his arrival. He addressed the troops: they had suffered misfortune and privation; he would make end to that; and they would advance and thrust bayonets into enemy bellies. He issued the first of his famous manifestos, beginning, "*Soldats!*" They were starving and in rags; government had not paid them, had nothing to give them. Their patience and courage had brought no fame to them; no ray of glory lighted on them. He was about to lead them to the most fertile plains of the world; fruitful provinces and huge cities would soon lie at their mercy; wealth, honour, profit would reward them. . . . In less than two weeks he had gained his first victory over the Austrians. He forced their Piedmontese allies to sign an armistice, broke the Court of Turin from the coalition, overran Lombardy, besieged Mantua, and defeated the suc-

cessive armies sent to relieve the town. Early in the next year he brought the Pope to his venerable knees and compelled the Austrians to sign peace-preliminaries at Leoben, within eighty miles of Vienna, soothing their lacerated pride with an offer of the Venetian dependencies in exchange for Lombardy and Belgium, prepared to deal with the State of Venice as the Empress Catherine with Poland, ruthless and piratical in his transactions. His first campaign revolutionised Italy, founded the Cispadane, the Cisalpine and Ligurian Republics, and set him finally on the perilous and bloody way to a mastery of Europe; despotism at home, tyranny, pillage, destruction abroad, woe, and death in his island prison.

He asked his diplomatic acquaintance, after the preliminaries at Leoben and before the concluding treaty of Campo Formio, if they thought he triumphed in Italy only to give splendour to a Directory of lawyers, or to found a Republic! A Republic of thirty millions, with French morals and French vices! How could that be possible? A chimera had taken possession of France; but that would pass. Frenchmen wanted glory, knew nothing of liberty. Army victories had shown the true character of the soldiers, and he was everything to them. If the Directorate took his command from him, they should see who was master. The nation needed a chief made illustrious by glory, not by theories of government, fine phrases, idealistic and unintelligible jargon. Men must have playthings, to amuse them, and would be guided, since he knew where to lead them. So much for his stern realism. As for peace, it did not suit him; for with peace he would no longer be at the head of an army, and must renounce the high position he had won for himself, in order to play lackey at the Luxembourg. He would leave Italy only when he could return to France to play a rôle similar to his present rôle; but the moment had not come; the pear was not yet ripe: *la poire n'est*

*pas mûre*. A day would arrive when he would enfeeble the republicans, but not to the profit of the Bourbons. He must wait, apparently in league with republicans. So much for his nascent romanticism.

He had been approached by Bourbon agents, as other eminent generals, and promised the Dukedom of Milan, the baton of Marshal, if he would favour monarchy; but he refused to play the part of Monk, restoring a King, nor did he allow others to take that part. He sent Augereau to stage-manage Fructidor for him, though he planned to overturn the Directory; the pear, however, was not yet ripe. And so he went to the East, having conquered Italy, leaving the Directorate to founder whilst he won victories in Egypt, adding to his glory, easing the way to dictatorship. He took the best of the French troops with him; and scientists, mechanics, engineers, writers, interpreters, chemists, mathematicians; and a chosen library, with the Bible, the Koran, and Montesquieu catalogued under the heading, *Politics*. He was aware that a second coalition-war must disgrace the government, almost ruin France, and make his recall imperative; and he left France to her sufferings. The young man who had aped Rousseau, writing of liberty for Corsica, believed now that the world needed a colossal drill-sergeant; and he would drill men, in the meantime taking a flight to Egypt, to find dazzling employment till he could return to France, save France, and establish himself. His despotic impulse and design took fresh shape and colour, became Oriental, grotesque, in Egypt; and he deepened his conviction that vanity had made the Revolution and would end it, that liberty stood merely as a pretext. Liberty, he said, was the hunger of a small, enlightened minority, and could be ignored; equality pleased the multitude: he would give them equality. So much for his psychology.

He captured and plundered Malta on his way to

the East, ignorant of the fact that Nelson was in search of him, had barely missed him at Toulon, driven by storm from his course. He occupied Alexandria, marched through the desert, fought the battle of the Pyramids, took possession of Cairo; dreamed of possessing the whole eastern world, a second Mahomet. His fleet lay in Aboukir Bay. Nelson, cruising off the coast, found that fleet and annihilated it. Bonaparte learned of the disaster, and said quietly that they were now alone in Egypt, cut from France: the Turkish Empire would crumble; he would use the country as a base for new conquests. Turkey declared war on France and had help from Russia.

Bonaparte began his Syrian campaign, took Gaza, massacred two thousand prisoners at Jaffa, faced with an administrative problem, like a Carrier; though unlike Carrier he won the approval of military critics. He besieged Acre, having expected to capture the town and to discover arms and treasure enough to arm all Syria. He would march on Damascus, and Aleppo, enlarging his army as he advanced, luring the people with a promise to abolish the tyrannous government of the *pachas*; he would reach Constantinople, demolish the Turkish Empire, change the face of the East, found a new Empire, and possibly return to Paris by way of Vienna, after crushing Austria. He was beaten at Acre, missed his destiny, he said, frustrated again by the English, and had to retreat across the desert; and the horrors of that retreat under a devouring sun were nearly as memorable as the horrors of a retreat years later in Russian frosts and snows. Bonaparte had to postpone his new Oriental Empire, blockaded as he was, his army plague-ridden, mutilated, tragically discouraged. News filtered to him from Paris; and though he had recovered prestige by his slaughter of Turks at Aboukir, he concluded that the pear was at last ripe and he must hasten to pluck it.

He left the Egyptian army, as he would leave the Grand Army in Russia, indifferent to men when they were no longer immediately useful to him, taking his leap, changing his centre; to prepare for other leaps, and with new armies, regardless of human considerations in his superhuman greed, his interfused and overruling lust. Could a statesman, a man such as he, afford to have sensibilities? Was he not a *personage complètement excentrique, toujours seul d'un côté, avec le monde de l'autre*: a personage utterly *excentrique*, always alone, separated from the rest of mankind? He accepted no conditions, no obligations of any sort, no code but his own. Years after, he said his aims had been humanitarian, and he may have believed himself; that he had meant to be a crowned Washington, and could attain such an end only by a universal dictatorship. Cæsar, Alexander, Charlemagne, Mahomet, Washington: he claimed them all as factors of his own *excentrique* personality; also that moral laws and laws of *convenance* had no relation to him. Thus he proved himself not greatly different from most ambitious men, rabid, vulgar, his distinctions being more of quantity than of quality.

At the moment the English had trapped him in Egypt. He must escape. France, tottering once more, stood exposed; and now at his mercy. He must return straightway, taking a full and prompt advantage of the situation, ousting the Directorate ere he began the campaign that would establish his omnipotence at home and prepare the ground for his final omnipotence abroad. He had failed to grasp fortune at Acre: he would not fail a second time. So said Bonaparte. Accordingly, on a night in August, 1799, two frigates left Alexandria, carrying him and men of his staff. Those frigates eluded the English cruisers, and one of the most venturous of Bonaparte's exploits ended at Fréjus, early in October. France uprose to acclaim the soldier, to welcome the saviour who, presumably,

would make end to war, terror, corruption, bankruptcy, royalist and anarchist plots, rebellions; who would affirm the glory of the Revolution and give a real liberty to a nation yet struggling valorously at the frontiers; and exhausted, famished, almost in dissolution at the centre.

Bonaparte posted to the capital, leaving his baggage to follow him; and the man who would begin on a pillage of Europe at his own time had his goods pillaged by royalist-brigands in the neighbourhood of Aix.

### III

The reception given to Bonaparte on his way from the seaboard to Paris in all likelihood exceeded his hopes, and confirmed his assumption that France saw in him the man who would protect the middle-classes in their possession of national substance offered for sale to them after confiscations, and jeopardised by threats of a royalist reaction and a Bourbon return; and Jacobins acclaimed him, believing him to be a sound revolutionist opposed to the tyranny of the new rich, the monopolists, the stockjobbers. The Constitutionalists assumed he would renovate administration and re-establish conservative or liberal republicanism. The army proclaimed him as a war-chief and a pacificator among nations, and recruits who had shunned duties now ran to the colours, excited to have their part in the final battle for freedom. All classes were in apathetic or intense revolt against the present system; and only a few keen students of the political barometer glimpsed the dictator in Bonaparte.

He ought to have been thrilled with delight and flushed with pride as multitudes were vociferous in gratitude and praise; whereas he sat in his carriage, preoccupied, morose, gloomy, smiling mechanically and flatly now and again, trying and unable to act a suitable

pleasure. He had heard of his wife's infidelities during his absence. The omnivorous statesman had not yet swallowed the Corsican lover. He thought of exposures, revenge, divorce, all joy withered in him. He would make a riot in his own home, before the operations on the State, on Europe. The would-be master of the world had more of the sentimental, boyish soldier in him than of Charlemagne and Mahomet at that moment; perhaps at all times, and diversely, under this and that political disguise. To will to live and to know how to die was the summit of his mundane wisdom, the concentrated thought of the man; nor did he ever outstrip that practical philosophy, his will to power being the corollary, not the sublimation, of his will to live. As he drew near to Paris he was shackled in a will to prate at his wife. He found his home deserted, but for his mother; a woman ageing rapidly, calm, impassive, romance now tamed by reality in her, watching her son, not moved by clamour, renown, greatness, suspecting the end in her deep, intuitive sagacity. Joséphine had gone to meet and to propitiate her spouse. She went astray on the road, and failed in her charade. Bonaparte shut out sight and sound of a Paris illuminated and delirious in honour of him.

He called at the Luxembourg the next day, without ostentation, the soldier close-hidden in the civilian paying his modest respects to the Directors he would silence; and they concealed their fears and thoughts, received him amiably, embracing him. He had little to say; went home again, to meet his wife. After hours behind fastened doors he agreed that there should be no divorce, accepting her tears and mock penitence, crushing that particular sentimentality in himself, by force of will; nor did he allow the statesman and soldier ever again to be seriously pestered by the lover.

His house became a centre of dark activity, politicians, generals, ministers, journalists, financiers, agents



and optimistic adventurers coming and going; and when he put questions to the few intimates who knew a fragment of his design, asking did they believe the thing possible; Yes, they said, quite possible, in fact already three-parts done. His brother Lucien, in the Bonaparte enthusiasm of late, had been elected President of the *Cinq-Cents*. Bonaparte thence drew comfort; for his soundings had revealed to him that difficulty and perchance danger might lie for him in the *Cinq-Cents*, of whom nearly half were Jacobins anxious to steal authority from the Directorate; and he knew that most of the *Anciens* would be sympathetic in a thorough revision of the Constitution. He thought of joining the Directorate, but legally a Director must be over forty, and he was thirty; and further soundings disclosed the truth that Gohier and Moulins were not in a warm accord with him. He turned to Barras; who pranced and smirked, and in his fatuous self-confidence thought Bonaparte would be content with army authority, acknowledging some other as first President of the new Republic. Bonaparte told the attentive, cute Fouché that nothing could be done with a clown like Barras. Sieyès remained; and he had a faithful lieutenant in Ducos, the esteem of many *Anciens*, the regard of several of the *Cinq-Cents*. Sieyès and Bonaparte knew they were necessary one to the other; and they sniffed like mastiffs, uncertain whether to make truce or snap, postponing the issue. Talleyrand, very much to the fore, sleek, wily, complacent, limping his quiet and courteous way from and into corners, had no especial antipathies, able to measure a Bonaparte and a Sieyès; and he tried to unite the men, helped by Lucien, and the sprightly Roederer, an old and ardent apostle of democracy converted to discretion now, busy as the rest of them, relying on Bonaparte for the future.

Bonaparte disliked the notion of achieving his aim and end by employing faction, and he schemed to

consolidate all parties, with himself as undisputed chief, discounting the earlier and brutal methods when men had wrought revolutions within the Revolution; for he had to break the Constitution, and would do his damage constitutionally; or, rather, would have it done for him by the Constitutionalists. As a member of the *Institut national* he paid his court to scientists and philosophers, good liberals, most of them, who would be a valuable asset; and he exchanged felicitations and compliments, wheedling them subtly. Sieyès also had his place at the Institute; and the scientists and philosophers, the good liberals, took an urbane share in the delicate operation of bringing the men together and forwarding the plot. Sieyès and Bonaparte met; but they were yet skirmishing. A week later, Bonaparte said he would wait on Sieyès. Sieyès sent word that he had a Directory appointment at the hour named. He expressed his regrets. Bonaparte received Sieyès' messenger in a crowded room. He lost his temper and barked at him. Talleyrand told his master not to be a fool. He laboured to arrange further meetings, skilful and patient. Bonaparte spent an evening at the Luxembourg. Sieyès informed his friends on the morrow that he and Bonaparte would act in concert to promote a political change.

Preliminaries had been devised early in November; and Sieyès faced a new, sour disappointment, having no guarantee that his Constitution would be accepted; not yet in despair, but unhopeful. Joséphine would be used to steer the uncertain Gohier, who played amorous vassal to her at this time; Barras could be made ineffective; the financiers would provide money. Roederer's son, apprentice-printer, was instructed to set up proclamations in secret at a proper hour; the majority of the *Anciens* were forewarned and ready. Most of the generals gave themselves to Bonaparte in a design political and not specifically martial, though troops were to co-operate in the event of unhappy

emergency. Other officers might be won over, or must be made ineffective, like a Barras. The Inspectors to the Councils, the functionaries who regulated the business of the *Anciens* and the *Cinq-Cents* and had the bodyguard of the legislature at their disposal, were with the conspirators to a man; not so those grenadiers, who might be inclined to fulfil their privileged duties at an inopportune moment. Lucien had the chair in the *Cinq-Cents*, a few supporters among them, and would do what he could; and actually he outshone his brother at the instant of crisis.

The Councils had to be moved from Paris, to avoid interference on the part of the people, an unlikely peril; for the Commune had ceased to exist, and Sansculottes were disillusioned, not eager to rise again and do rash hackwork for politicians who would forsake them when schemes were accomplished. The inspectors of the *Anciens* were to summon an extraordinary meeting an hour before daylight at the Tuileries, using caution so that the few doubtful members of the august Council should not know of such an unusual event. The *Anciens* would be told of a conspiracy against the Republic engineered by Jacobins, terrorists; wherefore the Councils must away to Saint-Cloud for safe deliberation. Bonaparte would be appointed to the command of all the troops in and around the city. Sieyès and Ducos were certain to resign their Directorship; Barras and Gohier could be urged or forced to do likewise; Moulins might be intimidated. A new executive in agreement with Bonaparte's Consular aims must be formed, the irregularity being conducted by a regular process. A new Constitution must be created, Sieyès attending to legislation, Bonaparte to recalcitrants; for the present executive had fallen into decay and could no longer govern, therefore the *Anciens* would speak, take measures, instructing Bonaparte, influencing the *Cinq-Cents*, who must be persuaded, morally compelled to

submit. All France, Bonaparte argued, would joyfully accept such a political change; and so he must be invited to have his will, would not impose his will, and there could be no recriminations after, when he set himself to reorganise France.

At seven o'clock on the morning of November 9, Brumaire 18, the *Anciens* met at the Tuileries, though about sixty had not been summoned. Meanwhile Bonaparte had announced that he would hold a military review in the gardens of the Tuileries at an early hour that day; and troops were on parade. The President of the Inspectors' Commission spoke mysteriously to the Council of Jacobin plots, sinister reports, alarming signs. . . . Affairs worked out to programme. The *Anciens* decreed, as they had the right to decree, that the two Councils should meet the next day at Saint-Cloud and all deliberations must be suspended until then; and, as they had no right to decree, that Bonaparte should execute the orders, in command of all troops. An address to the people declared that such measures would enchain faction, give peace at home, lead to peace abroad. And so, "*Vive le peuple!*"

Two Inspectors drove to Bonaparte's house, made their solemn, official way through a small army of generals, officers, subordinates, major and minor conspirators, and were received with their message. Bonaparte, as solemn and official as they, accepted the orders of the *Anciens*. He rode to the Tuileries, surrounded by his glittering, warlike staff, followed by troops, drums beating, trumpets blaring. Sieyès had expected to take an equal share in that demonstration, waiting at the Luxembourg; and when he learned that the Directory guard had already left for the Tuileries and that he had been ignored, he rode off with two humble attendants and so reached the centre of action by a back door, as it were, unnoticed, and smarting. Barras, much disquieted, in a semi-hiding,

very cautious, sent his secretary Bottot to make enquiry and report to him.

Bonaparte stood before the *Anciens*, less at his ease here than in the flaming thick of a battle, perceptibly nervous. He made a stammering, brief speech. He and the *Anciens*, he said, wanted to found a Republic on liberty, equality, the sacred principles of national representation. He swore they should have it. The *Anciens* swore they would have it. Someone remarked that he had not vowed fidelity to the Constitution. This indiscretion passed without much notice. The President hastened to close the proceedings, members cried, "*Vive la République!*" and dispersed; to meet again on the morrow at Saint-Cloud. Bonaparte, frowning at his beggarly display before the Council, went to the gardens to review his troops. He noticed Bottot, who drew near to him. Bonaparte's talent as an actor and his genius as a strategist inspired him now. He used the occasion for one of his many dramatic and calculated outbursts, shouting at Bottot. He held him, shook him, his glance on the crowd, studying effects. What had Bottot's masters done with the France he, Bonaparte, had left in its splendour? He had given peace, and returned to find war; had left them with victories, found them in defeat; left them with the millions of Italy, found corruption and misery everywhere! And what had happened to the hundred thousand Frenchmen, his companions in glory? They were dead. . . ! When he had spoken in this fashion to the crowd, to Paris, to France, he added to the frightened secretary a reassuring and whispered message for Barras, and rode on to harangue his troops, to dispose them for the day, and the morrow.

The new decrees needed formal assent by at least three Directors. Gohier, asked to breakfast with Joséphine, had taken fright, sending his wife, and might be troublesome now; so too Moulins and the

slippery Barras. Talleyrand dealt with Barras skilfully, and may have bribed or blackmailed him. Barras signed a letter of resignation. He left Paris that day, with an escort as if he were a potentate, with his money-chest as if he were a robber. Barras ceased to trouble anyone. Gohier consented to sign the decrees with Sieyès and Ducos; would not consent to resign as a Director when his two colleagues had resigned. Moulins upheld him. Gohier and Moulins were segregated in consequence at the Luxembourg that night, beset with troops; and they also ceased to be troublesome. The Directory had gone into liquidation.

The *Cinq-Cents*, the danger to the scheme, had assembled at noon, in sight of cavalry posted round and about the Palace to remind them of possible and unpleasant facts. Before anybody could object or make enquiry, Lucien, their President, adjourned them to Saint-Cloud. They too dispersed, submissive at the moment; soon to be in uproar, most obstreperous after much consultation. The break of a night between the start and end marred Bonaparte's plot and hampered the conspiring leaders; nor did they wisely concert their plans for the next day, having faith in Lucien's assurance that the *Cinq-Cents* would be tractable. Before they separated, Bonaparte and Sieyès, with Ducos and their friends, agreed that provisional Consuls should make a new Constitution; and Sieyès' remark that Jacobin deputies of notable intransigence ought to be arrested forthwith met opposition from Bonaparte, the warrior less downright and cruel than the philosopher; not by reason of his humanity, but because he had decided that his revolt should differ from previous revolts, forgoing violence, so as to placate unferocious liberals.

The politicians that night relied on the soldier; the soldier relied on the politicians; and they all but came to grief.

## IV

The Apollo Gallery, a handsome large room on the first floor of the Palace at Saint-Cloud, had been assigned to the *Anciens*, the bleak Orangerie, with its narrow short stairway for entry, to the *Cinq-Cents*; and in the general disposition of buildings and adjacent levels, the window-sills to the Orangerie were raised only a few feet above the flower-beds and borders outside; a useful provision affording considerable relief to the *Cinq-Cents* in the sequel. Deputies began to collect soon after eight o'clock on a cold, bright morning, Brumaire 19. The majority had assembled within an hour or two. Workmen engaged in preparations at the Orangerie had not finished, did not finish before one o'clock; and deputies idled here and there, stood in groups, discussing the singular events of the preceding day. They questioned one another. Why had the Councils been removed from Paris? Why this vague talk of a Jacobin plot? Why had a minority of the *Anciens* not been summoned to the Tuileries? Above all, why this massing of troops in progress at the moment? And Bonaparte! a brigand! scoundrel!

He had arrived from Paris in state as the deputies chattered, exciting each other. He paced to and fro in a bare apartment on the first floor in a wing of the Palace. Sieyès and Ducos watched him. Messengers came and went, giving the news, taking instruction. Sieyès sat by the hearth, and stirred the fire now and again, quite calm. Bonaparte, shivering, fevered by anxiety, physically ill, tried to warm himself at the fire; left the fire, muttering, frowning. He could not yet take direct action, forced to a plaguy inaction, waiting for the politicians to help him, his remedial and other designs in the balance. Sieyès had a coach and team near to the Palace gates, in readiness to take him into a studious exile with his books if the day

were to prove abortive. Bonaparte had no philosophic seclusion to which he might retire. He had been dauntless, confronting enemy-dangers on land and at sea. Now his nerve forsook him. He did not cease to shiver, could find neither warmth nor comfort; an apprehensive poor imitation of a superman at that hour.

Word came that at last the Councils were sitting. The *Cinq-Cents* in their red togas, ornamental symbols of authority, had refused to be quiet when Lucien opened proceedings. A Bonaparte auxiliary proposed that they should adjourn after nominating a small Commission to report on the state of the Republic and to take measures of public safety: the hinge of the design. Deputies said No! The Constitution or death! Down with the Dictator! Bayonets did not alarm them! Here they were free! Nobody on either side knew precisely what they would do. The *Cinq-Cents*, in their uncertainty, wasted time, renewing the oath to the Constitution, one by one, arms extended, voices raised.

Bonaparte could not remain in the cold upper room. He went to the Apollo Gallery. Here the *Anciens* also were uncertain, without initiative. Members began to put maladroit questions. Bonaparte's sudden resolve to intervene, to force matters, startled them. He came on them brusquely, attended by a shrunken staff. Might he be allowed to address the Assembly? He maundered on about the dangers to the legislature. He must be permitted to speak with the freedom of a soldier. He did not wish to play Cæsar. No! The Directors had resigned; the *Anciens* must save France. Interruptions added to his confusion. The Constitution, he said, had been outraged frequently; no one respected it. He murmured something about Moulins and Barras, to account for Jacobin plots. He appealed to the grenadier-guard. If anyone in the pay of foreigners pronounced the word Outlaw against him, let the thunder of war crush such a tyrant! His



friends, more acute than he, were disturbed by this military threat and tried to warn him, to get him away. His speech ended ignominiously. He called on those who loved him to follow him, as if he were about to storm a bastion. He left the Gallery, and the bewildered *Anciens*.

Now he went to the Orangerie, as if it were in fact a bastion, and with a few grenadiers. He climbed the steps, appeared before the deputies, holding a riding-whip. Probably he meant to frighten the *Cinq-Cents*. They forestalled him. The sight of the military escort incensed them. They began to howl at him. Down with the Dictator! Down with the tyrant! Outlaw him, outlaw him! He was hustled and banged, in the thick of a vulgar scuffle; likewise his grenadiers. Coats were torn, faces scratched. Deputies used their fists, and their feet; certainly not daggers, no weapons of any sort. Others stood on the benches, and yelled. Outlaw him, outlaw him! . . . No visible premonition of the future Emperor in this belaboured, squat figure; dazed, fainting, with only strength enough to be at once angry and afraid. The conqueror of Italy and Egypt suffered a taste of the brutalities he would inflict on others in the days of his prerogative and splendour; the man who would kick Volney in the belly when Volney dared to say that France wanted Bourbons, not Napoleon with his Concordat, had to grovel himself that evening.

He was rescued, and went back to Sieyès and the fire; disgusted at himself, and terrified when news came that the *Cinq-Cents* would outlaw him. Sieyès said quietly that if they put him out of law, then let him put them out of the Orangerie. Bonaparte swung his sword, called on his soldiers from the window, descended to the courtyard. He mounted a restive horse, not yet quite master of himself, nor of that horse, seemingly. Meanwhile Lucien, in the Orangerie, declined to put the outlawry decree. He resigned the

Presidency, playing for time. He argued, pleaded from the tribune. Deputies also argued, and fumed, yet wasting time. They discussed a return to Paris, the command of troops; took courage once more and demanded an outlaw decree. Lucien sent word to his brother that he could not answer for the *Cinq-Cents*. He asked that Bonaparte might be heard. No! He flung his toga from him and clung to the tribune. Grenadiers made way to him. He left with them, as if he were being saved from murder.

Bonaparte had received Lucien's message. His troops of the line, he supposed, were loyal to him; not so the grenadiers of the Councils. He saw that if they were faithful to duty and turned on him, there must be war. If he were outlawed, he might go the way of Robespierre. Nature had bepimpled the great man; and later she would give him a cancer in his royal guts. He plucked at those pimples, raging, and bloodied his ashen cheeks. Smeared blood helped him as he spun a tale of daggers used against him in the Orangerie. He spoke of the land pillaged, his armies starved. He had gone to the *Cinq-Cents* to face traitors in the pay of England, miserable creatures, assassins! They had tried to stab him! He roused his own troops; could not rouse the grenadiers. They were uneasy at the dread word Outlaw, hesitating; indeed they might have wrecked him and his schemes had a Jacobin general given a bold and prompt lead.

Lucien came to them, and they looked to him for direction, seeing in him a chief of the authorities they were sworn to protect. He asked for a horse; for a roll of drums to command silence. He said the majority of deputies were in horror of audacious brigands, *représentants à stylets*. Enemies paid by England were besieging the tribune, threatening patriots with death, wanting to outlaw the general appointed by the *Anciens* to execute their decrees. Lucien begged the troops to deliver those majority-representatives

from the representatives of the dagger. Let them expel traitors from the Orangerie by force. He supported a dramatic speech by a melodramatic action, pointing his sword at Bonaparte's chest. He would slay his brother with his own hand if ever he violated the liberty of Frenchmen!

Now the grenadiers believed they must in duty attack the Orangerie and deliver a good majority from a wicked minority. Soldiers cried out in their enthusiasm, officers drew swords. Bonaparte gave the signal. Drums beat the charge, and continued without pause to the end. A column of grenadiers, with fixed bayonets, marched up the steps to the Orangerie. The rest of the troops pressed on, shouting. Death to the Jacobins! Down with '93! The *Cinq-Cents* ceased to discuss that day. They sprang from windows, scattered in the woods of Saint-Cloud, ran as far as Paris. Fragments of red togas were found on twigs and bushes to mark the precipitate flight.

Many years were to pass before democratic assemblies again met in the name of the sovereignty of the people to make laws for France and to suppress faction.

On the night of Brumaire 19, a new provisional government was formed, enough deputies having been rounded up to issue decrees; to *nationalise* the Revolution, as a wag phrased it. At two o'clock in the morning, the three elected Consuls took oath. Bonaparte had plucked the ripe pear; and when there could be no further risk of failure, when by strategy, wiles, genius, tolerance, paraded benevolence, he had quelled or hoodwinked opposition, he would set teeth in that pear.

Napoleon, asked about his origins, said he began life in Brumaire 1799.

Bonaparte had to convince the French people that the events of Brumaire freed the nation from the forces of disruption and tyranny and would lead to a strong and benign government, to safety alike from royalist and Jacobin faction; to all that men longed for and had despaired of under the Directory; hence the turmoil of the *coup* must be tricked out and disguised so that good republicans might find hope and assurance and no recriminations could ensue. Fouché, the super-policeman, invaluable to Bonaparte at this hour, told the people that the Councils had met at Saint-Cloud in order to deliberate on the interests of the Republic and liberty; that General Bonaparte, having appeared before the *Cinq-Cents*, denouncing faction, had barely escaped assassination, only saved by *le génie de la République*, the spirit of the Republic; and in the *Moniteur*, the organ of government, a proclamation announced that the Republic, lately menaced, at the very edge of a chasm, would be grounded now on immutable foundations, and the nation must accordingly prosper in happiness. Let republicans be calm: all their rights were ensured, and they would resist the suggestions of those who laboured to create disorders from political incidents and searched to perpetuate vengeance. Feeble citizens, protected by the strong, could follow the course of their affairs and enjoy their domesticities in security; and only those who provoked disquiet, agitating folk, need fear.

Bonaparte, not yet indifferent to the psychology of peoples, knew that public opinion would resent a dictatorship avowed and unashamed; and for a time he did in fact seek to establish a humane, equitable autocracy in the name of a seemly democracy, acting on behalf of the people rather than expressly for himself, adapting what seemed best of the old monarchical system, reducing the flaws of revolutionary

democracy. He made end to the Law of Hostages, to harsh taxation levied against property, conciliating men who were ready to be loyal to the new executive, firm though not at once merciless against the rest; and toleration was extended to orthodox or non-juring priests, allegiance to the new Constitution being enough to protect Catholics from hardship, exile, death. And seven months after Brumaire he would cross the Alps to rout the Austrians. Here and there discerning, zealous republicans measured the real character of Brumaire, afraid that a military dictatorship would make ruin of the principles and the glory of 1789; the majority, however, had voted for the Constitution, number Five, with its privileged, complex suffrage, and its dominant First Consul elected for ten years. Bonaparte, addressing citizens, said that the Revolution had returned to the principles from which it arose: it was finished! The people in their cheerful servility fancied that commercial success, quiet at home, withal peace abroad, must follow automatically.

Under the Consulate, and central power with prefects and sub-prefects, the earlier organised and elected municipalities, Departmental Councils and democratic assemblies vanished, only their hapless ghosts remaining to lull the people and more or less to deceive them; and war, with but few intermissions, would torture France and Europe for the next fifteen years, before the return of the disillusioned, lopped and unrepentant Bourbons in the baggage-waggons of the enemy.

Bonaparte embodied the Revolution in himself, as he had said, reflecting much opinion and the will and the passions of France in his distrust of foreigners and hatred of England, his greed for conquest, plunder, and natural frontiers based on conquest with the corresponding hegemony of Europe, never recognised by Europe, such ancestral aims being enough to persuade an intoxicated nation to continue wars; and

the fame he won for himself on battlefields, and his genius in administration, made a national French hero of an adventuring Corsican, led to his election by plebiscite to a Life-Consulship, and to the Emperor-ship; though he could not survive a defeat. Always he claimed to represent the sovereignty of the people, and stood as the accepted citizen-King. He had to give uttermost payment as an unroyal island convict for his fugitive triumphs, nor could he understand how he had failed; and the people of France had to give payment for their infatuation. Yet in the sum total his Civil Code redeemed him, so far as anything could redeem conquest-wars and the demise of civil liberties.

The Consulate for Life marked the final rupture between Bonaparte and the liberals of 1789 who had helped to make or had permitted him to make the revolution of Brumaire; and a few politicians, democrats, philosophers of the *Institut National*, and others, knew at last that they had been trapped; and he derided them as ideologues in his jocular or vexed scorn of the Idea and his slavish worship of the Will. Men of the armies also bewailed the Life-Consulship. A general assembled his troops, called them Comrades, told them they must declare by vote whether General Bonaparte should or should not be First Consul for Life. Opinions were free, he said; but it was his duty to warn them that the first man who refused to pronounce for such a Consulship would be shot in view of the regiment.

That was the liberty allowed to Frenchmen less than three years after Brumaire.

The life-story of Bonaparte, the Corsican-Italian who had cursed France, vowing to do all the harm he could to Frenchmen, ended in 1804, when, discontent with his citizenship, he transformed himself into Napoleon I. His will remained, his intelligence had already weakened; for he believed in the reality of

this royal mummery. His coronation wanted nothing to complete the pomp of it but the half-million of men who had given their lives to put an end to such things: so said Augereau. As an Emperor low in moral vitality and void of majestic calm, he worked eighteen hours a day; doing more in three years than old Kings in a hundred, Roederer said; a royal despot, with the gift to adapt means to ends, the precision of a mathematician, the insight to select men to his purpose, to foresee events, to isolate significant facts from the mesh of sterile ambiguities, to grasp salients, alike in war and in politics; forceful in his movements and sovereign in his will. So until power became mania, ambitions entangling genius, will overreaching itself and making war on mind, on men, on the world. He too showed himself finally to be the poor besotted, most lonely fool of his own destiny, this man of his age who, in youth, had been a revolutionary and a republican. The spirit of the Revolution, pervading nations after years of savagery and slaughter, recreated peoples; and they had to crush the soldier who had been sired by that Revolution. Conquest made him what he was, he had said; conquest must maintain him. And conquest smashed him.

This man with his prodigious Me, thrusting everything to excess, admitting no obligations, no conditions other than those of his own grandeur, and folly, and rapacity, transgressed the Social, the human Contract, and went into exile, bayed and driven by rulers as rapacious as himself and herded for safety and success into a pack; and they could not demolish the superstructure he had raised in the days of his citizenship and republican virtue. The Emperor had gone mad, one of his men said to another; quite mad, and would overturn all things and provoke frightful catastrophe. Yet the man in his efficient megalomania had fleeting suspicions of himself; could stand before Rousseau's tomb and wonder aloud, confessing that the future

## BONAPARTE AND BRUMAIRE

must decide whether it would have been better for the world and for the repose of earth if he had never existed; and the master who had dispersed the *Cinq-Cents* with his bayonets on the evening of Brumaire, lived to brood and wither like a sick eagle in a cage.





## CONCLUSION

THERE were Frenchmen who thought the Revolution had achieved its purpose in July 1789 at the fall of the Bastille; in August with the abolition of privilege, feudalism, serfdom; in October when the people brought Louis from Versailles to Paris; in September 1791 with the acceptance of the first Constitution; in September 1792 with the inauguration of the Republic; in June 1793 at the collapse of the Girondins. Certain historians saw an end in July 1794 when the social and political mysticism of Robespierre and his fellows came to wreck and a glittering hard materialism triumphed. Carlyle wrote that the thing we specifically call French Revolution had itself blown into space and became something else at the insurrection of Vendémiaire, October 1795; others took Brumaire 1799, and saw an executioner, and a saviour, in Bonaparte; others Waterloo and the Restoration; others 1830 and the arrival of Louis Philippe; and 1871 also figured as the logical end of events announced to the world when the National Assembly braved the King. Between the death of Louis XVI and the final Republic, France had seven monarchs, six of whom died in exile; for the Revolution, like John Brown's body, mouldering in the grave, had a soul, for what men call good and evil, and went marching on, re-embodiment itself, blundering, perishing, reviving, indestructible like the soul of all things great and small in the eternal and incomprehensible flux.

Burke, as a political and radical thinker, said that a revolution was the only thing that could help the world; that nothing less than a convulsion could shake the globe to its centre and restore European nations to liberty. That was the view of Frenchmen when

Burke, denying himself, raged at the Rights of Man, the Sovereignty of the French People, and other dogmas in his opinion flung hot from a deep hell; and many Frenchmen kept their faith though the Revolution had its countless and inherent vicissitudes, contradictions, violences, absurdities, complex and dynamic. Men were forced to move with it, damaging themselves in the parlous effort to hold or to control it, fancying each crisis must end it, disillusioned and sometimes damned, imagining they made political history for France; though they had part in the concentrated and frequently tormenting history of humanity; all problems and difficulties posited there, all solutions leading inevitably to new problems, hopes and disappointments following in an endless alternation. And assuredly there were great ideals, noble impulses, high enthusiasms, in the early, fertilising days. The Revolution seemed radiant in the visible splendour of its risen sun, unclouded for a time; and storms gathered, leading to darkness and woe, never to irremediable, utter blackness.

Year by year philosophers and economists had searched to found new principles and to destroy old tyrannies and a corrupt sacerdotalism, resting their hopes on the achievements of science and reason. They allowed themselves to fancy that men could exercise an almost boundless power, creating, modifying, and transforming social conditions by act of parliament; and the waste and disorder, social inequalities, crimes and political slavery of old France and old Europe, stood as the protracted opening to the drama. Then revolt in France; and no European authority was unshaken. The States General, representing the nation, met ostensibly to deal with finances and to stem ruin. They overstepped bounds and promised an end to all social misery; for men now knew that the social well-being of a people must be the cardinal fact of national history and the outstanding

## CONCLUSION

purpose of rational government. The Assembly, yet faithful to the King, abolished a system that gave omnipotence to Kings, and began to frame a Constitution based on liberty, whereby all men would benefit, protected in the doing of what they assumed they must do as dignified citizens; and equality, whereby no men would have rights peculiar to themselves and prejudicial to others. The National Assembly determined to reconstruct France and to refashion humanity by decree, giving sovereignty to the people, executive and constitutional power to the King. A Declaration of Rights, the dream of philosophers and idealists, and a few statesmen, and already familiar to Americans, introduced that Constitution, number One, and fundamentally changed the character of the Revolution at the outset; for the people had wanted justice as citizens, freedom from arbitrary, unequal taxation; and now they learned they had natural and sacred rights as men. In the joyous excitement of this discovery, the duties of man were neglected or forgotten. The Third Estate had made the Revolution and meant to govern: the Fourth Estate, spurred by that Declaration of the Rights of Man, thought they were entitled to revolt against the iniquity of any bad government. They had seen the Third Estate flout the aristocrats; and they in turn flouted the Third Estate, worshipping equality, demanding the admission from authority of their Rights. The Revolution entered on another phase; and in the ensuing and perpetuated class-war, liberty receded as an aim and became only a party cry. A central problem of the Revolution lay in that fact, and remained, not soluble at that time, nor after; not soluble until by evolution and education the Third and Fourth Estate fuse, confronting new problems in the interminable quest for a real freedom; until the virtues of democracy absorb and transmute the vices and men are neither rich nor poor, ignorant nor afraid.

## HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The French Revolution was middle-class, attacked alike by royalists and the Sansculottes, having to fight to maintain authority, losing ground and regaining ground. The middle-classes were responsible for the modern, industrial world; and numbers of them began to suspect that a revolution to found civil liberties might imperil civil liberty by the nature of its origin. The Third Estate, in order to exist, had been compelled to make bounteous promise to the Fourth Estate; spawned demagogues, opportunists, would-be dictators, as well as constitutionalists and humanitarians; and factions spread, rancours and vanities multiplied in the struggle for predominance. Meanwhile, innumerable men who had shared in the changes of 1789 and were now proprietors, looked for and would give support to any government strong enough to defend their properties derived from confiscations, and to prevent the return of *émigrés* burning to take revenge for spoliation. Thus laws against *émigrés*; reprisals, proscriptions, threats of extermination, violences and cruelties similar to those inflicted by Louis XIV on the Huguenots; and whatsoever verbal justification there might be for such inhumanities and atrocities was denied to a former age, and claimed by the Revolution; for the Huguenots had not sought to overturn the State and to make slaughter, whereas the *émigrés* were in arms against France, full of sound and fury.

In the revolutionary fervour and credulity of 1789, Frenchmen had repudiated the secret diplomatic jobberies of pre-revolution France and Europe, anathematising conquest-wars, rapine, national aggrandisement, resolved to establish universal peace, having crushed feudal privilege and tyranny at home, and hopeful by their faith and example of liberating Europe from the fetters imposed by absolute monarchs and cynical or brutal politicians. The peoples of all nations were brothers and, enlightened by France, they would aid each other in fellowship according to their power as

## CONCLUSION

citizens of one great and humanised federation, leagued against predatory rulers and their aristocratic accomplices and flunkies, enemies of the sovereign people and the universal legislator, Nature. Pacific declarations roused the derision and cupidity of Europe and encouraged foes who had suffered grievously in war with old France and dreamed of reducing the new France to the humble status of a minor power; who saw imbecility in pacificism, and a fatuous prey in French legislators with their notions of a world redeemed by fine phrases and rhetorical oaths. France in her apparent innocence and her follies ceased to alarm Europe, for a while. French idealism with its sanguine dreams had to descend to a bellicose realism, in self-defence, soon teased by the perennial and universal ironies. The first illusions perished and the Revolution, after trying its wings, took to muddy earth again.

By the end of 1792, France had adjourned the idea of peace, announcing a Republic with new defensive frontiers, natural frontiers, the frontiers of Cæsar's Gaul: France had become more forcefully militant than Europe, determined that she would not cease to fight until foes had been thrust across the Rhine and she had mastered Europe, an hereditary greed for territory and dominance having revived, swamping the good intent of the National Assembly and of a people intoxicated with the heady rich wine of Universal Brotherhood. Liberty, equality, the Republic one and indivisible, had become inseparable from those natural frontiers, and France challenged Europe, wanting to make a vast and obedient French Republic. Europe could not, would not, dared not submit, and had to struggle now to maintain her own independence against a France more dangerous and insatiable than the France of Louis XIV. The French Revolution had been impelled by enemies abroad, and by the germs in its own blood from the past, to deny itself and its confederating virtue. The pacific effort, however, had

been made; and that too had a soul, able to go marching on, bedraggled and lame, barely alive; not always in despair as the years passed, begging crumbs, a pariah in search of a home; and wondering if it must expire in a foul ditch, or at last control a League of Nations.

The Revolution had hovered and staggered between extremes, battling with nations and counter-revolution, excesses, abominations, intestinal and frontier conflicts following in succession, heroisms and treacheries jostling one with the other, many sinners and perhaps a few saints having to whirl in a common and a most bloody maelstrom. The invasion of France, and civil-war, the fall of the monarchy, Country-in-danger measures, financial tricksters, monopolists, enemy-agents, profiteers, led to a Revolutionary Tribunal in the name of national safety, a Revolutionary government, the Terror; to reaction, pillage to fill empty war-chests, to the outraging of social and national Contracts; to the fall of the terrorists, when peril waned, and the rise of an oligarchy anxious and cunning to protect itself and its own material interests, driving the country to desperation once more, to bankruptcy and famine. Force had been invariably used to reduce this and that crisis; civic-force in the early years, citizen defenders, and offenders; and then, after Thermidor, legislators appealed to the army, and henceforth insurrection and suppressions took new shape. The army had arrived: the Rights of Man had to make place for army-discipline. Military chiefs became politicians, ushers to the age of Napoleon. Once again the Revolution was involved in fatal contradictions. The people in their need, and fears, welcomed Bonaparte, and acclaimed the benevolent dictator, after rousing themselves time after time in a righteous indignation against less sturdy and resourceful dictators; and they allowed the Corsican to reach to a royal despotism.

## CONCLUSION

Always men had come forward, striving, intriguing in the attempt to glorify themselves and to ensure the gains of the Revolution, and to make end to the accompanying and seemingly and for a while inexorable evils: Mirabeau, foiled by his own venalities and the duplicity of the Court; Talleyrand, La Fayette, Barnave, Condorcet, Danton; able men, two of them great men; they also foiled, having looked to the Left, then, recoiling from anarchy and confusion, to the moderates, fruitlessly, overwhelmed in the speed of the Revolution-chariot, helpless to curb it, mistrusted by Right and Left, ending in ruin. The men of the Gironde were hounded out by a Robespierre, a Saint-Just; they too predestined. France, disillusioned, grew weary, and made surrender to the man who, unlike his fellow-soldier Hoche, had not learned by experience and a mature wisdom that governments were made for the people, not peoples for governments; that the people, needing leaders, could be properly governed only in accord with their affections, their wishes, their faith, though they might be deceived, that too for a time.

The Rights of Man, transferred over boundaries, had shown themselves to be the Rights of Frenchmen. Conquered or liberated nations were called on to make oath and to vote for a government: they must decide to be free, in a manner agreeable and profitable to France, otherwise they would be punished as enemies. Men revolted in the name of laws promulgated by their invaders, inspired by a new national sentiment, a will to be free in their own way, resisting the armies of the movement which, in its beginnings, had raised splendid banners, leading a crusade to end the old world of arbitrary Kings and enslaved peoples. France, in her war on Kings and in the national uprising to establish the right to govern herself, taught the principles of national unity and democracy to Europe, changed peoples, and had herself to be thrashed finally,



and by the fact of her despotism, after imposing her revolutionary creed on Europe.

Fouché, in 1815, untouched by the moral and universal significance of the events in which he had taken a share, not wholly infamous, wrote to Wellington, saying that those who imagined one could govern men with pompous formulas and the announcement of abstract principles knew neither the human heart nor the source of power. Yet the formulas and abstract principles of the French Revolution survived, so much fecundating life - stuff, creating nationalities strong enough to defy holy and unholy alliances and the interests of Royal families, to engender the robust virtues, also the inherent vices, of a mutually exclusive nationalism and imperialism; preliminary to the wider, far distant international ideal, the liberty of different nationalities with their several customs in a common membership of one sovereign community; the Federal States of a Universal Republic. France tried to formulate the principles of Social Justice, neglected those principles in her peril and need, by the drive of political necessity, producing an ambitious Emperor, losing her Empire; but the principles remained, basic, though frequently ignored.

And so Europe owed much political machinery and many political ideas and ideals to the men of 1789, as they to the few prophets and seers who had preceded them; and the French Revolution broke the authority of Kings, abolished feudal lords and their system, trimmed the claws of the theologians in the effort to rationalise religion and to reduce old and new superstitions. Catholicism and Protestantism had failed to unite nations fraternally. Reason, the direct medium of self-control, based on experience, and not devoid of insight, imagination, may eventually succeed, rejoicing the shades of Condorcet and his revolutionary brethren. Accordingly, in the future, if man by emergent evolution and continuity becomes a truly

## CONCLUSION

reasoning being, free from lust and greed, and unlike an animal longing for power over other creatures; if Rights and Duties, Liberty and Equality, become synonymous and war, all war and any war, is discovered to be barbarous, homicidal folly, and is universally condemned, obliterated, a share in these changes will be attributable to the French Revolution; for at its best it emphasised a world process, dimly envisaging a humanity controlled by science and reason, unblighted by egoism, dogma, selfish nationalism, and enjoying liberty of thought, of conscience, individual liberty, national liberty, able to practise a religion unencumbered by an obsolescent theocracy, a citizenship free from dictation. When Diderot spoke of the entrails of priests being used to strangle Kings, he coined a brutal and extravagant figure to symbolise a new and incalculably potent spiritual truth, he too envisaging a world controlled by science and reason and built on justice; and Diderot, the herald of a new spirit, was a spiritual father of the French Revolution.

Mirabeau predicted that the Revolution would conquer the whole of Europe; and conquer it did. And it maintains conquest of a sort to-day, by the idealism of 1789; by the hope that perhaps man may advance, though slowly and painfully, toward light, regenerated by mind and liberated from all superstition. And, anyhow, "*Ce qu'il y a de consolant, c'est qu'on arrive nécessairement quelque part.*"



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## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE, 1789-1799

1789

January	24.	States General summoned.
May	4.	States General at Versailles.
June	17.	States General a National Assembly.
"	20.	Tennis-court oath.
"	23.	The Royal Session.
"	27.	Three Estates united.
July	6.	First Constitution Committee.
"	14.	Bastille stormed. First <i>émigrés</i> .
"	15.	National Guard formed.
August	4.	Feudal system abolished.
"	27.	Rights of Man declared.
October	1.	Banquet at Versailles.
"	5.	The people march to Versailles.
"	6.	King and Assembly remove to Paris.
December	2.	Church property nationalised.
"	21.	First <i>assignats</i> issued.

1790

March	29.	Defensive alliance between Poland and Prussia
May	22.	Decree against wars of conquest.
July	12.	Civil Constitution of Clergy decreed.
"	14.	Feast of Federation.
August.		Garrisons revolt at Nancy.
September	4.	Necker resigns.
"	6.	Mutiny at Brest.
December	26.	King assents to Civil Constitution oath.

1791

April	4.	Death of Mirabeau.
June	21.	King's flight to Varennes.
July	17.	Champ de Mars massacre.
"	25.	Austrian-Prussian alliance.
August	27.	Declaration of Pillnitz.
September	3.	First Constitution voted.
"	13.	Union with Avignon decreed.
"	30.	End of Constituent Assembly
October	1.	Legislative Assembly.

# HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

## 1791

- November 9. Decree against *émigrés*.  
 „ 12. King vetoes *émigré* decree.  
 „ 29. Decree against refractory priests.  
 December 19. King vetoes decree against priests.

## 1792

- February 9. *Émigré* property confiscated.  
 March 10. End of Feuillant ministry.  
 „ 24. Brissot forms ministry.  
 April 20. War declared on Austria.  
 May 19. Russia invades Poland.  
 June 12. Brissotins dismissed.  
 „ 20. The people invade Tuileries.  
 July 11. Country declared in danger.  
 „ 14. Second Feast of Federation.  
 „ 25. Sections begin sittings.  
 „ 27. Brunswick's Manifesto.  
 August 1. National Guard reorganised.  
 „ 10. Attack on Tuileries.  
 „ 23. Fall of Longwy.  
 „ 27. Elections to Convention begin.  
 September 2. Allies occupy Verdun.  
 „ 2-6. Massacres in the prisons.  
 „ 20. Battle of Valmy.  
 „ 21. Convention assembles.  
 „ 22. Republic proclaimed.  
 „ 28. War against Sardinia. Nice occupied.  
 October 14. Prussian retreat begins.  
 „ 21. Custine occupies Mainz.  
 November 6. Battle of Jemappes.  
 „ 14. French occupy Brussels.  
 „ 27. Savoy incorporated in France.  
 December 3. King's trial decreed.

## 1793

- January 4. *Comité de Défense général* established.  
 „ 14. Prussians invade Poland.  
 „ 19. King's death decreed.  
 „ 21. King guillotined.  
 „ 23. Second partition of Poland.  
 February 1. War declared on England and Holland.  
 March 7. War declared on Spain.  
 „ 9. Representatives sent on mission.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1793

March	14.	Vendean rebellion begins.
"	18.	Dumouriez defeated at Neerwinden.
April	5.	Defection of Dumouriez.
"	6.	First session of Revolutionary Tribunal. First <i>Comité de Salut public</i> .
May	3.	Decree of <i>maximum</i> .
"	18.	Committee of Twelve.
"	31.	Insurrection against Girondins.
June	2.	Fall of Girondins.
"	6.	Seventy-five deputies protest.
July	10.	<i>Comité de Salut public</i> reorganised.
"	13.	Marat murdered.
"	26.	Fall of Valenciennes.
August	23.	<i>Levée-en-masse</i> decreed
"	28.	English occupy Toulon.
September	5.	Revolutionary Tribunal divided into four Sections.
"	8.	Battle of Hondschoote.
"	17.	Law of Suspects decreed.
"	29.	General <i>maximum</i> decreed.
October	3.	Girondins proscribed: seventy-five protesting deputies imprisoned.
"	10.	Revolutionary government decreed until peace.
"	14.	Trial of Queen.
"	16.	Battle of Wattignies. Queen guillotined.
"	24.	Trial of Girondins begins.
November	10.	Feast of Reason.
"	26.	Battle of Kaiserlautern.
December	4.	Revolutionary government organised by law
"	18.	British and Spaniards evacuate Toulon.
"	26.	Battle of Weissenburg.

1794

March	24.	Hébertists guillotined.
April	2-5.	Trial and death of Dantonists.
May	18.	Allies defeated at Lille.
June	8.	Feast of Supreme Being.
"	10.	Law of Prairial.
"	25.	Battle of Fleurus.
July	27-8.	Thermidor. Fall of Robespierre
"	31.	<i>Comité de Salut public</i> reorganised.
August	23.	Government reorganised.
November	11.	Jacobin Club closed.



# HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

## 1794

- December 9. Seventy-five deputies liberated.
- „ 16. Carrier guillotined.
- „ 23. *Maximum* abolished.
- „ 27. Holland invaded.

## 1795

- February 9. Peace with Tuscany.
- „ 17. La Jaunaie peace-treaty.
- March 8. Girondins recalled.
- April 1. Insurrection of Germinal.
- „ 5. Basel treaty signed.
- May 16. Peace with Holland.
- „ 20. Insurrection of Prairial.
- June 25. Luxembourg capitulates.
- July 22. Peace with Spain.
- August 22-30. Fructidor electoral decrees.
- September 6. Jourdan crosses Rhine.
- „ 20. Pichegru occupies Mannheim.
- October 1. Belgium incorporated with France.
- „ 3-5. Insurrection of Vendémiaire.
- „ 26. Convention ends.
- November 3. Directory installed.
- December 31. Armistice with Austria.

## 1796

- April. Bonaparte begins Italian campaign.
- May 10. Babeuf conspiracy suppressed.
- „ 15. Peace with Sardinia.
- October 16. Cispadane Republic founded.

## 1797

- January 26. Final Polish partition.
- „ 30. Brottier conspiracy suppressed.
- February 19. Peace with the Pope.
- April 18. Peace preliminaries at Leoben.
- June 6. Treaty with Genoa.
- July 9. Cisalpine Republic formed.
- „ 15. Cisalpine and Cispadane Republics united.
- September 4. *Coup d'état* of Fructidor.
- October 17. Peace of Campo Formio.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1798

February	15.	Roman Republic founded.
March	5.	French occupy Berne.
"	9.	Left bank of Rhine ceded to France.
"	29.	Helvetic Republic founded.
May	11.	Second electoral <i>coup d'état</i> .
"	19.	Bonaparte sails for Egypt.
June	12.	Malta occupied.
July	2.	Alexandria occupied.
"	21.	Battle of the Pyramids.
August	1.	Battle of the Nile.
October	21.	Cairo rebellion.
December	4.	France declares war on Naples.

1799

January	2.	Great Britain, Russia and Turkey allied.
March	7.	Jaffa occupied.
"	12.	Austria declares war on France.
"	19.	Siege of Acre.
"	25.	Jourdan defeated at Stockach.
May	21.	Siege of Acre raised.
June	.	Suvóroff's Italian campaign.
July	12.	Law of Hostages.
"	25.	Battle of Aboukir.
August	15.	Joubert defeated at Novi.
"	22.	Bonaparte sails for France.
October	9.	Bonaparte lands at Fréjus.
Nov.	9-10.	Revolution of Brumaire.
December	24.	New Constitution.



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